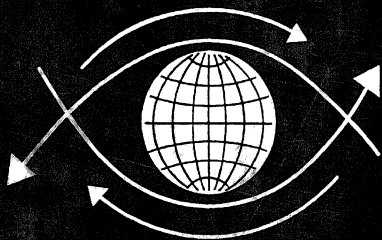


HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

AMERICAN HUMANISM

its meaning for world survival



WORLD PERSPECTIVES

edited by

Ruth Nanda Anshen

AMERICAN HUMANISM

by Howard Mumford Jones

There is a great deal wrong with American humanism today, but it is not beyond repair. In fact, Dr. Jones states, the humanities in America may still assume the intellectual and spiritual leadership they have temporarily abandoned.

Meanwhile, a condition of anarchy prevails on campuses, among scholars, writers, and teachers, that makes the role of a true humanist well-nigh impossible. Our academies maintain mutually suspicious and separate faculties. The graduate schools with their assortment of "disciplines" can stifle creativity and reflection. Intellectuals have deserted the firing line on behalf of systems which denounce the rational as irreverent, or

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Its Meaning for World Survival

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WORLD PERSPECTIVES • *Volume Fourteen*

Planned and Edited by RUTH NANDA ANSHEN

AMERICAN HUMANISM

Its Meaning for World Survival

BY HOWARD MUMFORD JONES



New York

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Some parts of this volume were originally the basis of lectures given by the author at Clark University.

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ERRATUM

On the jacket of this volume Dr. Howard Mumford Jones is incorrectly identified as the "former" Chairman of the American Council of Learned Societies. Dr. Jones is at present Chairman of the American Council of Learned Societies.

World Perspectives

It is the thesis of *World Perspectives* that man is in the process of developing a new consciousness which, in spite of his apparent spiritual and moral captivity, can eventually lift the human race above and beyond the fear, ignorance, and isolation which beset it today. It is to this nascent consciousness, to this concept of man born out of a universe perceived through a fresh vision of reality, that *World Perspectives* is dedicated.

Only those spiritual and intellectual leaders of our epoch who have a paternity in this extension of man's horizons are invited to participate in this Series: those who are aware of the truth that beyond the divisiveness among men there exists a primordial unitive power since we are all bound together by a common humanity more fundamental than any unity of dogma; those who recognize that the centrifugal force which has scattered and atomized mankind must be replaced by an integrating structure and process capable of bestowing meaning and purpose on existence; those who realize that science itself, when not inhibited by the limitations of its own methodology, when chastened and humbled, commits man to an indeterminate range of yet undreamed consequences that may flow from it.

This Series endeavors to point to a reality of which sci-

entific theory has revealed only one aspect. It is the commitment to this reality that lends universal intent to a scientist's most original and solitary thought. By acknowledging this frankly we shall restore science to the great family of human aspirations by which men hope to fulfill themselves in the world community as thinking and sentient beings. For our problem is to discover a principle of differentiation and yet relationship lucid enough to justify and to purify scientific, philosophic and all other knowledge, both discursive and intuitive, by accepting their interdependence. This is the crisis in consciousness made articulate through the crisis in science. This is the new awakening. This is the *declaration of dependence*.

Each volume presents the thought and belief of its author and points to the way in which religion, philosophy, art, science, economics, politics and history may constitute that form of human activity which takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity and difficulty. Thus *World Perspectives* endeavors to define that ecumenical power of the mind and heart which enables man through his mysterious greatness to re-create his life.

This Series is committed to a re-examination of all those sides of human endeavor which the specialist was taught to believe he could safely leave aside. It interprets present and past events impinging on human life in our growing World Age and envisages what man may yet attain when summoned by an unbending inner necessity to the quest of what is most exalted in him. Its purpose is to offer new vistas in terms of world and human development while refusing to

betray the intimate correlation between universality and individuality, dynamics and form, freedom and destiny. Each author deals with the increasing realization that spirit and nature are not separate and apart; that intuition and reason must regain their importance as the means of perceiving and fusing inner being with outer reality.

World Perspectives endeavors to show that the conception of wholeness, unity, organism is a higher and more concrete conception than that of matter and energy. Thus an enlarged meaning of life, of biology, not as it is revealed in the test tube of the laboratory but as it is experienced within the organism of life itself, is attempted in this Series. For the principle of life consists in the tension which connects spirit with the realm of matter. The element of life is dominant in the very texture of nature, thus rendering life, biology, a trans-empirical science. The laws of life have their origin beyond their mere physical manifestations and compel us to consider their spiritual source. In fact, the widening of the conceptual framework has not only served to restore order within the respective branches of knowledge, but has also disclosed analogies in man's position regarding the analysis and synthesis of experience in apparently separated domains of knowledge suggesting the possibility of an ever more embracing objective description of the meaning of life.

Knowledge, it is shown in these books, no longer consists in a manipulation of man and nature as opposite forces, nor in the reduction of data to mere statistical order, to reductionist dogmatism, but is a means of liberating mankind

from the destructive power of fear, pointing the way toward the goal of the rehabilitation of the human will and the rebirth of faith and confidence in the human person. The works published also endeavor to reveal that the cry for patterns, systems and authorities is growing less insistent as the desire grows stronger in both East and West for the recovery of dignity, integrity and self-realization which are the inalienable rights of man who may now guide change by means of conscious purpose in the light of rational experience.

Other vital questions explored relate to problems of international understanding as well as to problems dealing with prejudice and the resultant tensions and antagonisms. The growing perception and responsibility of our World Age point to the new reality that the individual person and the collective person supplement and integrate each other; that the thrall of totalitarianism of both left and right has been shaken in the universal desire to recapture the authority of truth and human totality. Mankind can finally place its trust not in a proletarian authoritarianism, not in a secularized humanism, both of which have betrayed the spiritual property right of history, but in a sacramental brotherhood and in the unity of knowledge. This new consciousness has created a widening of human horizons beyond every parochialism, and a revolution in human thought comparable to the basic assumption, among the ancient Greeks, of the sovereignty of reason; corresponding to the great effulgence of the moral conscience articulated by the Hebrew prophets; analogous to the fundamental assertions of Christianity;

or to the beginning of a new scientific era, the era of the science of dynamics, the experimental foundations of which were laid by Galileo in the Renaissance.

An important effort of this Series is to re-examine the contradictory meanings and applications which are given today to such terms as democracy, freedom, justice, love, peace, brotherhood and God. The purpose of such inquiries is to clear the way for the foundation of a genuine *world* history not in terms of nation or race or culture but in terms of man in relation to God, to himself, his fellow man and the universe, that reach beyond immediate self-interest. For the meaning of the World Age consists in respecting man's hopes and dreams which lead to a deeper understanding of the basic values of all peoples.

World Perspectives is planned to gain insight into the meaning of man, who not only is determined by history but who also determines history. History is to be understood as concerned not only with the life of man on this planet but as including also such cosmic influences as interpenetrate our human world. This generation is discovering that history does not conform to the social optimism of modern civilization and that the organization of human communities and the establishment of freedom and peace are not only intellectual achievements but spiritual and moral achievements as well, demanding a cherishing of the wholeness of human personality, the "unmediated wholeness of feeling and thought," and constituting a never-ending challenge to man, emerging from the abyss of meaninglessness and suffering, to be renewed and replenished in the totality of his life.

Justice itself, which has been "in a state of pilgrimage and crucifixion" and now is being slowly liberated from the grip of social and political demonologies in the East as well as in the West, begins to question its own premises. The modern revolutionary movements which have challenged the sacred institutions of society by protecting social injustice in the name of social justice are examined and re-evaluated.

In the light of this, we have no choice but to admit that the *un*freedom against which freedom is measured must be retained with it, namely, that the aspect of truth out of which the night view appears to emerge, the darkness of our time, is as little abandonable as is man's subjective advance. Thus the two sources of man's consciousness are inseparable, not as dead but as living and complementary, an aspect of that "principle of complementarity" through which Niels Bohr has sought to unite the quantum and the wave, both of which constitute the very fabric of life's radiant energy.

There is in mankind today a counterforce to the sterility and danger of a quantitative, anonymous mass culture, a new, if sometimes imperceptible, spiritual sense of convergence toward world unity on the basis of the sacredness of each human person and respect for the plurality of cultures. There is a growing awareness that equality may not be evaluated in mere numerical terms but is proportionate and analogical in its reality. For when equality is equated with interchangeability, individuality is negated and the human person extinguished.

We stand at the brink of an age of a world in which hu-

man life presses forward to actualize new forms. The false separation of man and nature, of time and space, of freedom and security, is acknowledged and we are faced with a new vision of man in his organic unity and of history offering a richness and diversity of quality and majesty of scope hitherto unprecedented. In relating the accumulated wisdom of man's spirit to the new reality of the World Age, in articulating its thought and belief, *World Perspectives* seeks to encourage a renaissance of hope in society and of pride in man's decision as to what his destiny will be.

World Perspectives is committed to the recognition that all great changes are preceded by a vigorous intellectual re-evaluation and reorganization. Our authors are aware that the sin of *hubris* may be avoided by showing that the creative process itself is not a free activity if by free we mean arbitrary, or unrelated to cosmic law. For the creative process in the human mind, the developmental processes in organic nature and the basic laws of the inorganic realm may be but varied expressions of a universal formative process. Thus *World Perspectives* hopes to show that although the present apocalyptic period is one of exceptional tensions, there is also at work an exceptional movement toward a compensating unity which refuses to violate the ultimate moral power at work in the universe, that very power upon which all human effort must at last depend. In this way we may come to understand that there exists an inherent independence of spiritual and mental growth which though conditioned by circumstances is never determined by circumstances. In this way the great plethora of human

knowledge may be correlated with an insight into the nature of human nature by being attuned to the wide and deep range of human thought and human experience.

In spite of the infinite obligation of men and in spite of their finite power, in spite of the intransigence of nationalisms, and in spite of the homelessness of moral passions rendered ineffectual by the scientific outlook, beneath the apparent turmoil and upheaval of the present, and out of the transformations of this dynamic period with the unfolding of a world consciousness, the purpose of *World Perspectives* is to help quicken the "unshaken heart of well-rounded truth" and interpret the significant elements of the World Age now taking shape out of the core of that undimmed continuity of the creative process which restores man to mankind while deepening and enhancing his communion with the universe.

RUTH NANDA ANSHEN

New York, 1957

AMERICAN HUMANISM
Its Meaning for World Survival

I.

American Culture

CONTEMPORARY Americans regard themselves as the defenders of the West against Communism; and if the prospect of American cultural dominance awakens uneasiness and even resentment in other lands, diplomacy, armies, and the facts of economic life compel many countries this side of the Iron Curtain to acquiesce, at least, in the proposed American century. Not that the acquiescence is universal. In Latin America there is stubborn resistance to the Yankee. Though a republic like Mexico has an uncomfortable number of juke boxes, intellectuals south of the Rio Grande continue to extol the merits of a culture older than that of North America, and compounded out of radically different elements—Indian, Negro, Spanish, Portuguese, Oriental. South of us a *personalismo* unknown to North America dominates, as Stanley Williams pointed out; there, Catholicism, whether you are a believer or not, forever sets you apart from the non-Catholic world, if Santayana is right. But though these great forces work against Washington, the cultural imperialism of the Giant of the North increasingly stamps its impression upon life in the West Indies, Central

America, and republics, great and small, still more distant from us.

In Asia and Africa American culture makes intermittent progress. Once the Americans had forced their way ashore at Kurihama, Japan hastily westernized itself, but in so doing it began the alternation of attraction and repulsion with regard to the West that has distinguished its history in two centuries. Americans have supplied missionaries for the souls, and oil for the lamps, of China, where, as elsewhere in Asia, their technical and medical *expertise* has left its mark, but this contribution is presently smothered by Communism. At the other edge of Asia, Israel is essentially an American cultural outpost retaining its precarious foothold in the bellicose world of Islam. Point Four programs and military aid color the life of nearby Turkey and, in some degree, that of the Arab states as well. True, the resurgence of Islam so takes the observer back to the days of the caliphs and the concept of a jihad he begins to surmise that American missionaries, technologists, and business have not altered the Mohammedan universe as much as he once supposed, but their influence nevertheless persists. Africa, on the other hand, is least affected by Americanism, whereas, despite their emotional attachment to "home," the Australians, the New Zealanders and the Tasmanians are perforce compelled to look to the District of Columbia for guidance in international affairs.

It is clear even from this superficial survey that the spread of the American version of Western culture has been irregular, but it is clear also that it continues. For the first

time in its history the United States is peddling culture to other lands—by Fulbright professorships and student exchange, by cultural attachés, by American “institutes” at Salzburg, Munich, and other university centers, by sending *Porgy and Bess* on tour, by libraries supported at government expense, by films, by radio, by loans and constructions and reconstructions, by other programs, public and private, varying in aim and operation but all designed to “sell America abroad.” One surmises that earlier Presidents would have been bewildered by these amazing international responsibilities. Europeans, Australians, Asiatics, and Africans must occasionally feel as the British felt at Yorktown when, for the march past at the surrender, the regimental bands played “The World Turned Upside Down.”

In this program Western culture is sometimes presented as “the American way,” as if the American way were unique and not based on history. But it is often remarked that neither the Americans nor anybody else can define this mysterious phrase. Sometimes “the American way” is made equal to “democracy,” as if democracy could only be pure when it is American. Sometimes it seems to mean technological superiority, as if the Americans, who picked up interchangeable parts from France, textile machinery from England, and basic scientific ideas from abroad, had acquired a monopoly on applied science. Sometimes it is made synonymous with the American concept of higher education as mainly consisting of apologetic and jolly relations between professors and undergraduates. Sometimes; alas! it comes out as hypocrisy, materialism, and an obses-

sion with the myth that the Prince of Darkness, a being singularly like Cotton Mather's Satan, controls the Kremlin.

But if the spread of the American version of Western culture has been irregular, there is no evidence that it has spent its energy. I hope I do not equate Hispanism with the philosophy of *mañana*, but for a variety of reasons Hispanism seems to have gone geographically about as far as it seems likely to go, just as Islam, however energetic its current manifestations, seems unlikely to overrun other lands and other peoples (except for Israel) as it did in its ancient prime. In fact, it is patent to most observers that the two most dynamic cultures (at least in the West) are the Russian and the American. The Russian dynamism seems dedicated to political conquest, the American to cultural hegemony mainly, and spreads, where it spreads at all, among lands and peoples the United States has not the slightest intention of annexing. I say this with particularity: a republic that cannot make up its mind to take Alaska and Hawaii into the Federal union is not likely to absorb more distant territory. But the United States is certainly trying to get as much of the world as it can to enlist "on our side" in a kind of treatyless cultural union that has little to do with NATO or SEATO or any other set of military letters.

Of course "the American way" has been identified with everything from salesmanship to sanitation, but such identifications are too pat to satisfy thought. They throw no light on the nature of the Americanization of Western culture, for they commonly deal with matter, not with mind. Yet the European scientist or savant coming to the United

States for the first time discovers a republican form of life not in the least like cartoon versions of Uncle Sam's home. He soon learns that the streets of New York are not paved with gold, the American businessman is not dollar-mad, the American female is not perpetually rushing from the divorce court to remarriage, the American ear is not solely attuned to jazz, American taste is as much annoyed by advertising, television, soap opera, and the usual movie as European taste can be, and American public life is not the same as night-club personalities, demagogic senators, and reputations artificially created by a public-relations expert. He discovers in the art museum and the symphony concert, the university library and the scientific laboratory, the teaching hospital and the institute for advanced study a life so familiar he instantly accepts it because it derives from sources he knows. American intellectuals behave like intellectuals elsewhere; and if the free masonry of international research is interfered with by such political measures as the McCarran-Walter Act, he finds American specialists deploring it as heartily as he does. Inevitably, therefore, his definition of "the American way" becomes even hazier than it was, and he may even infer that the United States is just Europe with more money.

For the life of the American intellect, he concludes, is still cast in European molds. It has suffered no such violent shock as that experienced by the Japanese intellect when Japan became "Western." It has undergone no such revolution as that experienced in Russia when Russia communized itself. Indeed, he may even discover with dismay that

the fiery original impulse that brought the United States into being and that long set it apart from the rest of the Atlantic community as a dangerous radical nation has now so far disappeared that the United States is presently the most conservative nation in the world. This conservatism, he observes, may be the product of a siege mentality paradoxically dominant in the "American century," and certainly transforms the role of the republic from one of innovation to one of being the foremost defender of cultural traditions.

But what tradition? The United States is not simply a more prosperous Europe. It is something odd and inconsistent. Like the Roman Empire the United States retains the form, but not always the substance, of its political youth. It is a country operating under a daring eighteenth-century constitution that has, however, become a Sacred Writing, and its operations rest upon a series of eighteenth-century postulates about equality and rationality that slavery in one century and Freudianism in another have brought into question. A vast increase in population diminishes rationalism in public debate, and cunning devices operated for selfish ends by political groups, advertising agencies, and even religion, perpetually denigrate reason by an appeal to primary emotions like fear and envy. It is a fact not without irony that Hitler in large measure borrowed his tactics from modern practices in the republic of Thomas Jefferson. How can men possibly make rational choices amid the clamor of sound trucks and the heat of klieg lights at political rallies? How can the intellect dominate a nation in which a billion

comic books are annually sold? Unlike most of the other members of the Atlantic Community, the United States has no established church, and separates church and state by law; yet in no other country is the church more powerful. All Europe can show nothing like that peculiarly American invention, the undergraduate college of arts and sciences. Unlike contemporary China the United States seeks economic variety in unity; unlike contemporary France it seeks political unity in variety. Unlike the Mediterranean basin it has not yet exhausted its natural resources, but unlike the Islamic world it is able, and sometimes seems ready, to destroy itself and everybody else by the application of science to elemental matter. The European observer is as puzzled now as he ever was.

The habit of defining the New World by comparing it with the Old is ancient. It goes back to Columbus' first letter, it conditions the writings of travelers during the American colonial period, it makes Crèvecoeur, de Tocqueville, Fredrika Bremer, Paul Bourget, Bryce, Siegfried, and their kind endlessly valuable to the historian, and it might therefore appear that every possible kind of comparison has been exhausted. Observers have instituted parallels between the grandeur of the Alps and the nakedness of the Rockies, the comfort of the London underground and the primitive Hudson & Manhattan tubes, the drinking habits of Detroit and those of Rome, railroads in the United States and railroads in Germany, the French *jeune fille* and the American flapper. Sometimes these comparisons really illuminate, as when Bourget defined the Young Girl as expressing the

essential traits of the Americans—idolatry of woman not as a Beatrice, not as a courtesan, not as an enigma, but as the supreme glory of national energy. He who desires to know what the American century is going to be like or who wishes to define the Americanization of Western culture need only study this enormous library and indulge in a little decent extrapolation to make his guesses.

In so far as the judgments of foreigners are the judgments of posterity, his guesses will be shrewd. But only in so far. The comparisons are comparisons of result only. If railroads, for example, are run by the state in Europe and (theoretically) by private persons in North America, the difference arises out of the varying applications of a common notion: the notion, namely, that economic activity is a central component of society. So far as the French girl and the American girl differ, that difference is one of degree, not of kind, and does not negate an accepted general philosophy of the family in Western culture. Even conflicts of opinion about the beauties of landscape originate in central assumptions about history, aesthetic emotion, and the goodness of earth—Hawthorne, that eminent American, lamented the absence of historical light and shade in America as if he were Chateaubriand.

Herodotus tells the story of an Asiatic king who asked some Greeks how much money it would take to get them to eat the bodies of their ancestors, and, when they refused with horror, called upon some barbarians to say how much it would take to get them to burn the bodies of their parents, only to be refused with the same loathing. Here is an abso-

lute difference in mores, a conflict as decided as that Mr. Northrop tries to mediate in his *The Meeting of East and West*. No such profound gulf separates America from Europe. They are separated by a common culture not by mutual abhorrence, and the differences between them are differences of application, of implementation, of emphasis. There is still a common core. But it is in the varying valuations given that common core that all the difference lies.

2

The cultural center common to the United States and Europe is the humanism of the West. Doubtless brave men were living before Agamemnon; doubtless Chinese humanism, Buddhist humanism, the humanism of Islam are just as good as that of the Mediterranean basin; doubtless both culture and humanity were components of cultures older than any Herodotus knew. The stubborn, if parochial, fact is that for the West its own brand of humanism is central. That humanism began as an act of scholarship, and from this act of scholarship proceed significant cultural elements common to the Atlantic community. Modern music, modern painting, modern literature, modern printing, modern architecture, modern concepts of the state—these and a dozen other governing ideas were or are the products of that vast excitement we call the Renaissance, even though the existence of the Renaissance has been antedated until the concept dwindles and dies like the smile of the Cheshire cat in *Alice*. But the smile and the cat persist.

There is still a crude element of truth in the phrase "The

Dark Ages," all modern scholarship to the contrary notwithstanding, just as there is still brilliant insight in the definition of the Renaissance as the rediscovery of the world and of man, despite the admirable labors of the Medieval Academy of America. America descends from the Renaissance, not from the Middle Ages. It was discovered in 1492, not in 800. Its constitution begins: "We, the people," and not, "I, the King." The commendatory verses that adorn the works of its first man of letters, Captain John Smith, are written in the idiom of Shakespeare, not that of Peter Lombard, and the first historical collection that throws light on American history is Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*, which begins with an account of a historian's education in "Greeke, Latine, Italian, Spanish, Portugall, French, or English" and with public lectures "in the common schooles to the singular pleasure and generall contentment of my auditory." Whatever vague medieval tincture American culture may have once exhibited has long since been washed out by the energies of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

Western humanism has been characterized by two dominant traits: it was anti-theological, and it was based upon classical authority. The very term *humanitas* differentiated secular learning from theology, and the basis of the new distinction was the discovery (or the rediscovery) that the ancient world had gotten along very well without benefit of the Christian clergy. After 1492 the savant could be a scholar without having been a theologian, and a philologist did not have to assume that Hebrew was the language of

heaven in order to settle *hoti's* business. Some humanists, of course, were theologians or had theological training. Some theologians, including a few popes, were humanists. In view of the honorable history of Christian humanism, one should not assume that in order to be a humanist one had to become a skeptic, a deist, or an atheist, as people did in the Enlightenment. Even the church, once hostile to the writings of the pagans, came in time to support schools where the beauties of Cicero were studied and imitated, just as it collected into museums and libraries the remains and manuscripts of antiquity. But though the central difference was often thus obscured, it remained central. Church patronage no more preserved a monopoly of learning than church patronage preserved a monopoly of music. Humanism escaped from the scriptorium and ceased to bow before the altar, and though humanists were sometimes made melancholy by this loss of divinity, humanism came more and more to insist upon the autonomy of reason and the example of the ancients. It built a new philosophy for individualism here and now, whatever it may have neglected in the way of old theology for the soul in the hereafter.

These two dominant intellectual modes—the absence of emphasis upon theology and the presence of emphasis upon antiquity—were transplanted to the New World. When the English colonies were begun, vestiges of ecclesiastical control lingered in the cultural pattern, but they were vestiges only, and gradually withered. Today in the United States, outside Roman Catholicism, divinity, though it has some mild ritualistic recognition, is not central to American academic

life in the way that law or science or medicine is. If it appears, it is relegated to a subordinate place among the great secular faculties, or established on independent lines in institutions like the Union Theological Seminary. So characteristic an American institution as the state university has no faculty of divinity whatsoever, most liberal arts colleges have none, and the absence of such a faculty from a privately endowed university excites little comment, whatever the religious "revival" of the 1950's may prove to be.

But the concept of humanism as a system of knowledge resting upon the ancients is another matter. And the point is not whether Latin and Greek were seriously studied in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America, the point is the existence of a system of ideas and "values" dependent upon those who had interpreted the ancients in the light of modernity.

The great names which ring like bells through the discussion of American political theory in the eighteenth century are the names of these modern humanists—Beccaria, Grotius, Locke, Pufendorf, Sidney, Harrington, Vattel, Burlamaqui. Locke, who at Christ Church, Oxford, had lectured on Greek, rhetoric, and philosophy, became America's philosopher. Of Jefferson's scheme for education (that Jefferson to whom we increasingly turn in our effort to understand the Revolution) Samuel Stanhope Smith, the seventh president of Princeton, wrote that "the nature of the design must recommend it to every lover of learning and of his country; the idea was greatly imagined; and the whole plan bears an impression of the wisdom of antiquity,

when legislation and philosophy were always connected, and but different parts of the same sage characters." The young republic was to revive the glories of Greece and Rome. Names like Senate and President, classical images recurrent on American coinage and paper money to this day, the architecture thought to be appropriate to public buildings, the decorative style of the Federal period and that of the Greek revival, Washington as Cincinnatus, Harrison's Newport synagogue and in Philadelphia Latrobe's Bank of the U.S.A., the singular belief of the Connecticut Wits that they could create American letters out of hand by manufacturing new Aeneids and Odysseys—these and a thousand other circumstances show how the young republic was nourished in the matrix of humanism, of that eighteenth-century humanism which emphasized, not the *virtù* dear to the Renaissance, but reason, dear to the Enlightenment.

By 1830 or thereabout an inevitable difficulty developed. The unity of knowledge in Jefferson's time was a unity bounded by the classical origins of knowledge, but a classical origin had far greater meaning to Europe than it could possibly have in the United States. Half of Europe had been part of Rome; a large fraction of the other half had been part of Byzantium. All of the West had been contained in the Latin church, and much that is now behind the Iron Curtain had been Greek Orthodox. In the Old World learning had been international, had sprung from common sources and had long expressed itself across the boundaries of states by the use of an international tongue—that Latin in which Newton and Leibnitz had written. The jargon of

universities, indeed, still testified to Latinity—*artium baccalaureus*, *rector magnificus*, *philosophiae doctor*, *decanus*, and other terms scarcely Ciceronian but, like diplomas, avoiding all taint of the vulgar tongues.

Yet, however scholars might amuse themselves by saying that America was Plato's Atlantis and that Seneca had prophesied the discoveries of Columbus, the truth is that the United States, although it might be a conscious imitation of the Roman republic, was never a part of Rome. There was no more reason for making Latin the language of education than there was for employing Hebrew—in fact, not so much, since Hebrew was at least the language of the Old Testament, whereas Latin was merely one of the languages into which the Bible, Old Testament and New alike, had been translated. And, moreover, though Canada, or at least Quebec, was a part of the Universal Church, the American constitution recognized no church whatever, Latin-speaking or otherwise. If the church as a private institution wanted to chant in Latin the praises of God, that was no business of government and no concern of education.

Those who lament the vocational and superficial qualities of American education sometimes blame the schools and colleges for not firmly maintaining the "Latin requirement" as a *sine qua non* of liberal culture. They point to the humanistic curriculums of Europe in reproach. But Latin, and perhaps Greek, have a meaning in the Old World they cannot have in the United States. The European cannot avoid classicism. Here Caesar landed. Here is the very

strait through which Virgil sent the Trojans. Such and such a legal formula descends from Ulpian or Justinian; this or that title remembers the last twilight of the Holy Roman Empire. Outside of the Eternal City an aqueduct still stands; and at Athens earth still wears the Parthenon as her best gem. None of this can be true of the United States.

Despite dark rumors that members of the Continental Congress had been able to converse in Latin when they were fourteen or fifteen, the hold of the classical tongues upon American education was never firm. But this weakness has been obscured by geographic glamour. The classic tongues could not compare with the imaginative splendor of Greek and Roman places, distant, romantic, wonderful, picturesque. The dog-eared Horace lay on the desk, together with the much-thumbed Latin grammar, but these had nothing to do with, say, George Healy's "The Arch of Titus," showing Longfellow and his daughter in Rome in 1869, or with Thomas Cole's "Consummation" in "The Course of Empire" series, showing political success as a kind of perpetual arrival of Cleopatra's barge. Classical humanism—that is, the humanism of the Enlightenment—therefore quietly disappeared without anybody's noticing that it was gone. One did not notice it had gone because American authors fell under an enchantment, writing about Italy and the Mediterranean world in terms comparable to a Hollywood documentary. One of them—Edgar Allan Poe—in an incomparable phrase summed up the whole power of this surrogate for the real thing, when he wrote of the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. In sum, clas-

sical thought weakened or disappeared in proportion as classical glamour increased.

The violence of the conservative reaction against the French Revolution and against Bonapartism at the opening of the last century temporarily restored to religion what it was steadily losing—control of American education and therefore of the coloring of men's thoughts. In 1831 Stephen Girard, who named his best sailing vessels *Montesquieu*, *Rousseau*, and *Voltaire*, could still leave money for a college never to be contaminated by a clergyman's foot, but in fact the great philosopher of America in 1812 was no longer John Locke, but the Rev. William Paley. A universal Christian economy silently took over the unity of culture of the Classical Enlightenment. The pagan philosophers were either not read at all or read with condescension; the "beauties of Horace" never hinted at the sensual charms of *Lalage*; and the ruin of empires became a lesson, not in a cosmic principle as Volney had hinted, but in the great morality drama of the universe. Political economy was divinely ordained, and the total purpose of science, commonly known as natural philosophy, was to think God's thoughts after him. These thoughts usually came out as Protestant thoughts. The universe, except for the unfortunate weakness, wickedness, and ignorance of some of its inhabitants, was a happy, happy universe, in which young shrimp, bounding in clouds along the seashore, and the buzz of gnats alike expressed the beauty of a felicitous world. Despite the darker overtones of Calvin in this peculiar phase of Christian humanism, the Theologian in Longfellow's *Tales*

of the Wayside Inn expressed the nub of the new unity of knowledge when he said:

The reign of violence is dead,
Or dying surely from the world;
While Love triumphant reigns instead,
And in a brighter sky o'erhead
His blessed banners are unfurled.
And most of all thank God for this:
The war and waste of clashing creeds
Now end in words, and not in deeds,
And no one suffers loss, or bleeds,
For thoughts that men call heresies.

As a philosophy of history this was not true, but everybody wanted it to be true, and by and by, so it was supposed, both the heathen and the Roman Catholic would come around to accepting it.

The reorientation at work in the unity of knowledge was, however, more apparent than real. If, in the first half of the nineteenth century, theology, or rather Protestant Christianity, seemed to regain mastery of education, this control slipped away in the second half, so that by 1900 ecclesiastical qualifications for university personnel were obsolescent as education returned to the secular basis of the Enlightenment. Moreover, the unity of knowledge was not really altered by a surface change. The central aim was still cultural: to find out what tradition established as the best that had been done or thought in the world—meaning the world of western Europe. Specialisms had not importantly developed. The content of education was still the content of

humanism. The classics, however meaningless as taught, were still theoretically central. The social sciences formed no part of an academic curriculum. Science was essentially "classical" science—that is, mathematics, Newtonian physics, standard chemistry, and Christianized biology and botany, albeit these latter subjects were not everywhere taught. The research laboratory was no customary part of academic furnishings, and where there was one, it was the private possession of an eccentric professor, used only by him and his assistants. Science was, of course, eagerly pursued when it was "useful," as witness the success of Matthew Fontaine Maury with his hydrographic charts; or else it was "natural philosophy." Characteristic was Benjamin Silliman, of whom the pages of the *Dictionary of American Biography* observe both that "to study science was, to him, to learn of the wonderful manifestations of God in the natural world" and that his "courses, interesting and stimulating as they were, with their wealth of experiments and material illustration, were nevertheless essentially cultural in character." Self-conscious humanists of a later decade were to wish that scientists would go back to this simple scheme.

3

The American Civil War had its profound effects upon the unity of American knowledge. It encouraged the rise of engineering schools and of other technological institutions, it encouraged the application of science to industry as "invention," not for utility as Benjamin Franklin had done, but for profit, and it brought into being the Morrill Act,

which, providing grants of public land to states that would establish agricultural colleges, seemed to turn the state universities into the cow colleges of legend. The legend is unfair, but when Ezra Cornell endowed his university as an institution where anybody could study anything, though he by no means excluded humanism, he underlined the vocational attractions of higher education and simultaneously emphasized the multiplicity rather than the unity of knowledge. At Harvard, by and by, Eliot, though renouncing vocationalism, retained multiplicity, and out of Harvard, Henry Adams later was to equate unity with the Virgin and multiplicity with the Dynamo. Much has been said for and against these great men, but to attribute the breakdown of a Western cultural tradition to educators like Eliot or benefactors like Cornell is as wrong as it would be to attribute it to Henry Adams. The change lay deeper.

When the Johns Hopkins University opened in 1876, Clark University in 1887, and the University of Chicago in 1893, the United States had accepted the proposition that a university is a collection of experts rather than a congregation of scholars, a concept based on contemporary German practice but without traditional German form. *Expertise* became the new ideal in knowledge, and *expertise* ruled everything from Sanscrit to child psychology, just as it produced everything from Child's *English and Scottish Ballads* to the Morley-Michaelson experiment. *Expertise* was perfectly fair-minded. It did not care whether you specialized in the metrics of Anglo-Saxon verse, or spinal anesthesia, or topology, or the business cycle, or fruit flies,

or the protection of methyl from oxidation; it did not care whether you were a Republican or a Democrat, a Jew or a Methodist, a positivist or a transcendental idealist—all it asked was that you should be the best possible expert in your "field." The pursuit of truth became an unending quest, "science" had limitless frontiers, knowledge grew from more to more, and the morality of mankind was bound to strengthen as man left "superstition" behind him.

Two great books appeared, to validate this pleasing concept. One was William James's *Principles of Psychology* (1890), in which the philosophy of pragmatism was already evident—a philosophy that assumed truth to be operational, not ultimate; and the other was Andrew Dickson White's *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896), in which theology was almost always wrong and science was almost invariably right. The preface says: "In all modern history, interference with science in the supposed interest of religion, no matter how conscientious such interference may have been, has resulted in the direst evils both to religion and science, and invariably; and, on the other hand, all untrammelled scientific investigation, no matter how dangerous to religion some of its stages may have seemed for the time to be, has invariably resulted in the highest good both of religion and of science." For him the only value of "the great sacred books of the world" was "in their revelation of the steady striving of our race after higher conceptions, beliefs, and aspirations, both in morals and religion," but precisely what these higher conceptions

were supposed to be, White did not trouble to say. Sufficient that ecclesiastical control was *passé*.

In the catch-as-catch-can world of academic *expertise* the humanities had precisely the same chance as any other "discipline." Officially, no hostility was expressed toward any branch of learning except possibly toward schools of education; and if, with the termination of ecclesiastical sanctions for American higher education, the study of Greek and Latin sank from its former vague centrality to a minor place in the curriculum, this was largely because the classicists, confronted at last with the artificiality of Greek and Latin in a country that was never a part of Rome, were unable to substantiate the claim that ancient writings were still a guide of life to members of an industrial republic. As departments of classics diminished their numbers other departments of *expertise* increased—English, for instance, and the foreign languages, philosophy, music, and the fine arts. And the comfortable faith of the Americans developed that these departments, taken together, constituted a new kind of unity—the unity of that part of knowledge commonly called the humanities.

In 1883 the creation of the Modern Language Association announced the passing of the ancient languages and the coming in of modernity as central to the humanistic tradition. The Modern Language Association, which now numbers about eight thousand members, is a powerful body of scholars in English and American literature and the English language, and in modern foreign languages and literatures. Nevertheless, it cannot be said—and the Modern

Language Association is the first to admit it—that the teaching of foreign languages has been one of the great pedagogical triumphs of American life. In Europe most young people have at least two languages at their command; in the United States, though there are those who can speak, read, and write a foreign language, and though government pressures have increased the study of foreign tongues for “practical” purposes, young Americans have no control over any language except their own—and not invariably over that. The two or three years spent in the high schools on Spanish or French or German are for the most part idly spent, even in the case of those who desire to become savants. It is commonplace in American universities for young men and women, ready to write their doctrinal dissertations, to try two, three, or four times to pass the simple tests in reading German, French, Italian, or other language required for this degree; and moreover, when they do pass the test, they regard it as a mysterious obstacle to a career rather than as an entrance into a foreign culture. It is even possible in the United States to enter some state universities with no knowledge of a foreign language and to be graduated from them in the same condition of sublime ignorance. In this area, clearly, there is no real connection between traditional Western humanism and American education.

In twentieth-century America the study of “English” is central to human scholarship, and on the surface seems to be fulfilling the traditional function of the classical languages. American scholarship in this area is the peer of scholarship anywhere else; and the theoretical assumption

is that the great masterpieces of English literature are as proper to humane learning as were the Greek and Latin classics—something to study for discipline and delight. Until a little after the opening of the century this consideration ruled the universities and governed the secondary schools. A body of “classical” British authors extending from *Beowulf* to Browning, a body of American literature running from Captain John Smith to Henry James—here was the core of liberal learning. From these lists appropriate titles were drawn for the secondary schools. These titles constituted the college entrance requirements, and assured everybody who got as far as the high school some rudiments of humane learning.

Today this requirement has vanished from most high schools. The graduates of these institutions have no literary tradition in common, but only something called “reading.” The English and American classics have given way to contemporary books, to magazines and newspapers, to problems in world government, citizenship, and student government, to learning how to write, to the production of plays, and to the publishing of the school annual or the school paper. The change has been justified by an appeal to “reality,” and, no doubt, something of freshness has come in. But something historical has gone out, and the result of this pedagogical innovation has been the denial of the possibility of literary tradition to the public schools. The only poem the American people have in common is the first stanza of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and the only prose is that of *The Reader’s Digest*.

When theology was ousted as queen of the sciences, philosophy ascended to the vacant throne. The problem of the status of philosophy in American culture is immensely complex. With rare exceptions—the Concord School of Philosophy is one—the study of philosophy in the United States has always been an academic pursuit. The disappearance or the urbanization of the village destroyed the village philosopher, beloved of American novelists, and the Americans are presently forced back upon professional thinkers holding university appointments for such speculative wisdom as they nationally possess. Apparently the academic philosophers are not altogether happy.

Some years ago the American Philosophic Association established a committee to examine the place of philosophy in higher education. The inevitable report made credible claims for philosophers, assailed verbalism, warmly recommended a more humane approach to this ancient subject, and hinted that spiritual values could not be nourished without philosophic nutriment. The teaching of philosophy has come to no harm because of this document, but one suspects that the teaching of philosophy remains about where it was. Philosophy is not a universal requirement for an academic degree. Young Americans seem to be more comforted by anthropologists and social psychologists than they are by philosophers. The vast moral problems raised by Communism, the atomic and hydrogen bombs, and the nature of the police state appear to be generally discussed without much attention to formal thought, and though the motto of Phi Beta Kappa is always admired, philosophy is

not a guide to life in America. Not that it necessarily is anywhere else. But our inquiry at the moment has to do with the centrality of Western humanism in the contemporary United States.

If in America the classics have been demoted, if literature in English no longer supports a tradition common to the American people at large, and if philosophy is not paramount, reports from other fields are more encouraging. The historians of course complain, but it is probably true that European history, or at least some parts of it (not including ancient history), is more commonly known in the United States than is European philosophy or foreign literature, and that the image of Europe general among Americans is an image shaped by historians, travelers, and foreign correspondents. In the second place, since the lack of a foreign tongue is not a necessary bar to comprehension, music and the graphic arts, European, Asiatic and American, are prospering today in the United States as they never prospered before. Though it is difficult to find out anything about contemporary Russian literature in, say, Kansas City, Russian music and musicians are not barred from the country for the reason that the law has no means of testing dangerous thoughts in B-flat; and the productions of European painting and architecture are, as images, more generally available through schools, colleges, museums, art books, and even television than is European writing. Music and the graphic arts do not depend upon verbalism.

But this success, gratifying in itself, is not necessarily the same thing as the success of humanism or of the humanities,

and here the inquirer may be baffled by the curious ambiguity in which American cultural and educational discussion proceeds. The word "music," for example, today means something quite alien to what it meant when the quadrivium consisted of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy; and the fine arts have so ambiguous a relation to the traditional liberal arts as to be relegated by many institutions to a special, and even peculiar, place among professional schools. The fine arts, intricate and thoughtful though they may be, differ from literature, the languages, philosophy, history, and theology by the simple fact that they do not depend upon language. They do not, like systems of philosophic thought (for example, Marxism) or like expressions of a total world view (such as one finds in the poetry of a Dante, a Shelley, or a Robinson Jeffers), demand a total intellectual readjustment before they can be studied. Most naïve listeners get *something* out of a Brahms symphony, whereas the naïve reader cannot get anything out of *The Wasteland* or *Finnegans Wake*, the philosophy of Schopenhauer, Mr. Toynbee's theory of philosophy, or the five points of Calvinism without considerable preparatory labor. All kinds of persons drift into art galleries, but all kinds of persons cannot similarly pick up and read *The Ring and the Book*. The painting is a visible object in a three-dimensional world, just as music is an auditory phenomenon in that same world. But what is the poem? The book? The type? Clearly not, in the sense that the sound is the music or the colors are the picture.

All this is not to deny, but to affirm, that music and the

graphic arts are valuable forms of experience and valuable readings of history. But the tradition of humanism is quintessentially verbal. You cannot think about the humanities—indeed, you cannot think the humanities—except in words. The nonverbal and sensory appeal of painting and music is admirable and good, but you cannot argue from the success of the fine arts in America to the success of the humanistic tradition. I do not imply that the fine arts lack thought, but if one is to answer the question: what have the Americans done to the humanistic tradition of the West? one has to turn to the intellectual order current in American education to find the answer. What have the Americans done to the humanism of the West? What do they understand the unity of knowledge to be?

II.

Doctrine of *Expertise*

THE Americans have substituted something called the humanities for humanism, and made them a third part of knowledge. Humanism is a philosophy of mankind; the humanities are simply variant branches of the general world of *expertise*.

The Americans are not unaware of the fractation of knowledge by specialisms, and in the effort to retain, or restore, unity they have taken two steps, one formal and the other operational, that will lead them, they hope, away from the brilliant anarchy that threatens learning in the United States. The formal step is the oft-repeated assurance that science, the social sciences, and the humanities are equal parts of one stupendous whole, whose body nature is—but whose the soul? The operational formula is the establishment of something called general education. This formula assumes that if a young American is exposed to equal parts of the triune division of knowledge, provided the exposure take a wide range and a long view, he will understand the unity of Western humanism. Neither assumption seems justified.

What is the learning thus subdivided? What is the unity thus mystically remade? No one knows. For Andrew Dickson White and his generation, fighting off ecclesiastical control of the search for truth, the unity was an emotional unity—the glory of going on. Theirs was the simple trust that you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. It was clear to them that you had to be free from something, but no one apparently bothered to ask if you were not also supposed to be free *for* something. The results of their optimism were not more optimism. The results were the Age of Anxiety.

In Western humanism the whole of knowledge was once supposed to proceed from and return to the glory and dignity of man.

Nature, that fram'd us of four elements
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres,
Will us to wear ourselves.

But at the end Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die, just as Dr. Faustus dies, because he was one.

To practise more than heavenly power permits.
Accordingly, knowledge might therefore also come under ecclesiastical control (as it virtually did in the United States before the Civil War), in which case it was supposed to

proclaim the wisdom, power, and glory of God; or, as the Massachusetts constitution puts it with reference to Harvard College, "the encouragement of arts and sciences, and all good literature, tends to the honor of God, the advantage of the Christian religion, and the great benefit of this and the other United States." But these two rubrics are in fact ignored by modern *expertise*. Scientists have long since ceased to hold chairs of natural philosophy, or argue for a teleological universe, or assume the doctrine of final causes, just as the humanists are currently so unimpressed by the glory of man they have abandoned the assumption that art mirrors ideal nature.

In his admirable *History of Italian Literature* Ernest Hatch Wilkins turns up a thirteenth-century letter, the author of which, writing home for money, tells his parents: "I have come to the garden of philosophy, a garden fair, delightful, and glorious, and I have desired to pluck flowers of divers colors, so that I might make a wreath of marvelous beauty which should shine upon my head, and in our own city should give forth a gracious fragrance to our friends and kinsmen." Modern students do not write this way, even from the Institute for Advanced Study, just as nobody has proposed to crown Robert Frost at the Capitol in Washington as Petrarch was publicly crowned in Rome in 1341. And although it may also pertinently be said that nobody offered to crown André Gide, the fact remains that election to the French Academy is still a matter of considerable interest in France, whereas election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters is scarcely of interest even to the *New*

York Times. So far have we in America departed from the glories of humanism. The humanities are no longer supreme, they are not even *primi inter pares* in the United States; they are merely a department of learning, and presently the weakest of the three formal parts of knowledge. A few years ago it was discovered that the individual scientist in the United States annually spent about \$1,800 on his research, whereas the individual humanist annually spent only \$130. The figures have been disputed, but the disparity remains. Why, amidst the applause given music and the graphic arts, and the comfortable belief that general education is tantamount to humane learning—why do the humanities not fare better in this great republic? And, more important, why are the Americans of the opinion that they are doing rather well by the humanities, and that the American century is not, after all, going to be like Mr. Orwell's 1984?

2

To millions of unsympathetic Americans the humanities are towering verbal structures of no immediate significance. And this sense of tedium and of bafflement is not confined to the naïve. A brilliant scientist once referred to certain colleagues as belonging to "the talking departments" of the university. The humanities do not demonstrate, they talk.

Moreover, in the United States the vocabulary of humanistic education is hagridden with ambiguity. Words and phrases melt into each other in pedagogical discussions with a dreamy lack of coherence more suggestive of Kafka

than of Aristotle. Argument is so confused by the ease with which terms avoid meaning that it sinks into mere good will, until no distinction is made, even by intelligent citizens, between the rigors of humanistic scholarship and the emotions aroused, or supposed to be aroused, by the teaching of the humanities as "appreciation." Let me try to illustrate by citing some of the key phrases that becloud the issue.

A simple example is the need of distinguishing between "arts" in the sense of the liberal arts, and "arts" in the sense of the fine arts. At first glance no difficulty seems to exist, especially if you call the latter the "creative" arts. But do the creative arts belong in a college of liberal arts? Advocates of their inclusion say they do, because education should be "creative," "responsive," or "appreciative." Defenders of tradition argue that the liberal arts descend from the Middle Ages. But what were the seven liberal arts of the Middle Ages? The scientists, who wish not to be excluded from honor, point out that the four branches of the quadrivium were not true arts, but branches of science—arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy—and that a liberal arts college is properly a college of liberal arts *and* sciences, meaning liberal sciences. Humanists are then likely to retort that the business of the liberal arts is with a mysterious something called "value judgments"; whereupon the scientists ask what the basis of value judgments may be. Traditionalists may then shift to the trivium—grammar, rhetoric, and logic—but these severely intellectual disciplines, retort the scientists, are scarcely the creators of value

judgments but rather modes of securing accuracy of statement, which is what science intended all the time.

Hard on the heels of these verbal confusions follows a second type. The "liberal arts" are basic to a liberal education, and a liberal education is supposed to be tantamount to living in the stream of Western humanism. Now any just view of a liberal education assumes that some balance between the sciences and the arts is desirable. What then becomes of the social sciences? They must belong either to the sciences or the arts, or they must exist, in intention, independently—a third part of knowledge. If the humanist admits this possibility, having once divided his kingdom with science, he has to divide his moiety a second time with social science and thus shrink his former empire to minority status, for the social sciences are, in intent, "science," so that he faces two parts science to one part arts. To get out of this dilemma he has two choices: he can call the social sciences "pseudo-science," and sometimes does so, or he can say that since Aristotle's time, the humanist has always known that man is a political animal. But the vast, if uneven, successes of social science would seem to validate its claims to science; and for the humanist to assume that he, and he only, is the proper person to teach Aristotle (or Plato or Bacon or anybody else) is to be liable to the charge that humanism, in this respect, is only amateur science.

This may seem like shadowboxing, but I can assure the candid reader that shadowboxing of this kind is constantly carried on. It is carried on by the humanist because he is loath to resign his traditional claim to centrality. Unfor-

fortunately it is difficult to substantiate the claim that the training of humanists is either superior or central, in a country in which the test of all training is *expertise*. The scientist, the social scientist, and the humanist go to the same graduate schools. They are each drilled in objectivity and exactitude. The scholarship of the philologist, the metaphysician, the art expert, the paleographer, the musicologist, and the historian is, or should be, as rigorous as the research done by the economist, the psychologist, the medical student, and the atomic scientist. An expert in Latin epigraphy is an expert in the same way that the biochemist is an expert. Indeed it would be difficult to demonstrate that the one, because the letters he deals with are the work of the human hand, is contributing to knowledge in a fashion mysteriously superior to the work of the other in contributing to our knowledge of the human body.

Perhaps Latin epigraphy is a minor matter. Let me turn to a field of larger import—the professional training of philosophers. In America philosophers are mainly academic people; that is, they earn their doctoral degrees by demonstrating ability to work skillfully with the tools of their specialism. As young men they are appointed to teach in this or that institution because the department has confidence in their training, and they specialize in Hume or logical positivism or symbolic logic just as the chemist specializes. They write expert articles for professional journals, they base their books on these articles, they are promoted because of this writing, and, being promoted, they acquire

the privilege of teaching specialized courses, not general ones.

No one doubts that philosophy is one of the humanities—it is probably the central “humanity”—but it cannot be argued that either the substance or the mode of training differentiates philosophers as humanists from the training of exact scientists. Indeed, does not American speech recognize the gulf separating the popular notion of philosophical from the expert notion? The man on the street who says to a disappointed friend, “Well, you’ll just have to be philosophical about it,” does not in the least intend that his companion shall instantly repair to a department of philosophy for advice, as, in other circumstances, he might repair to a lawyer.

3

Perhaps, however, Western man has somewhat romantic notions about humanism and humanists. The humanists of the Renaissance reshaped the European outlook, altered education, changed our concept of history, established sound notions of scholarship, got rid of a good deal of learned ignorance, and laid the foundations alike of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation. They produced such influential personalities as Petrarch, Lorenzo Valla, Melanchthon, Erasmus, Colet, and More. They ushered in the modern world, and for these immense changes the modern world must be forever in their debt. A great movement has the right, moreover, to be judged by its finest performances, and as long as More’s *Utopia* shines

on our intellectual horizon, as long as historians practice the skill with which Lorenzo Valla demonstrated that the Donation of Constantine was a forgery, so long as Plato shall charm us and Marcus Aurelius comfort, so long must the Atlantic community be grateful to the humanists.

But there is another side to the picture—the uncomfortable side, the side that, so to speak, was produced by status and training. Even the dry pages of the *Britannica* inform us that Lorenzo Valla was “a vain, jealous, and quarrelsome man” and “a venomous writer.” Most humanists were neither of the stature nor of the temperament of Erasmus and Melanchthon. However admirable the dedication of Browning’s grammarian to the cause of learning, he was, as Browning saw, an annoying fellow, stepping with pride over men’s pity, his eyes like lead, his accents uncertain, too arrogant ever to take a vacation and, at the end,

. . . with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still, through the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
While he could stammer.

He paid, in other words, a high price for specialism.

Contemporary assumptions in the United States that the humanists of the Renaissance were serene and gracious personalities are a misconception, a post-Burckhardt view, as anyone can discover if he will read an excellent study by Charles E. Trinkaus called *Adversity’s Noblemen*. After studying the lives of some twenty leading Italian humanists, Dr. Trinkaus finds their outlook conditioned by economic insecurity, a slavish dependence upon whimsical patrons,

and a haunting sense of not being understood. They were rather unhappy fanatics, who rationalized their war against the world into philosophies of misery or doubt so commonly that Dr. Trinkaus is able to summarize their outlook on life in these dismal words:

The humanists felt that the conditions of the world made it extremely difficult for man to make a direct happy adjustment with nature and that any direct adjustment with the environment was uncertain, arbitrary, and temporary. Complete satisfaction with life was therefore out of the question. . . . A man was not conceived to be an integrated being, capable of making a direct relationship with nature in solution of his wants and desires . . . a man, as he faced the world, was too fragile, too involved in making an internal adjustment and too corrupt to be able to make an external adjustment in defiance of the evil and insecurity of the world, without divine intervention, or the aid of magic or miracle.

The aid of magic or miracle seems no longer possible.

American humanists do not necessarily share this philosophy or partake of these temperamental qualities, but from the beginning, one suspects, the training of humanists has in some degree been the training of specialists. It would be miraculous, then, if in America this education did not continue to exhibit both the virtues and the defects of specialisms. If the Americans, with their passion for *expertise*, have carried training in specialism to excess, if it be argued that the Americans can return to a true understanding of Western humanism by adding liberal dosages of the humanities to training in science, social science, and technology, it is important to understand that training in the

humanities is not *per se* the medicine for the disease. One might as well assume that the undevout astronomer is necessarily mad or that the study of physiology will of itself turn the medical student into a noble altruist.

Fortunately the study of astronomy and medicine, the humanities and the social sciences from time to time produces noble and generous men and women. Fortunately the humanities, science, and the social sciences are, or can be made, noble and generous studies. But I see no reason to infer (as many have inferred) that concentration upon the humanities will somehow produce results different from the results produced by concentration in any other field.

I come now to my final exhibit in humanistic weakness, for which I must recur to the distinction between the modality of art and the modality of the humanities as instruments of expression. The artist is content to persuade and convince by the direct presentation of a work of art. From Ben Jonson's famous dictum, "By God, 'tis good, and like it if you may," down to Archibald MacLeish's famous statement, "A poem should not mean/But be," the artist, by giving independent life to what he creates, charges the work of art with influence to alter the lives of men. Humanists are not in this sense artists. They are scholars and expounders, who take art, morals, and philosophy as texts. Characteristically they not only expound, they preach, and sometimes they do not so much convince as convict, as, for example, our American neo-humanists did in the twenties and thirties of this century. This reformatory zeal has long been characteristic of humanists. Over the ages and across

the nations humanism has been evangelical, so much so that the old-fashioned German philologist, content to work out almost abstractedly the laws of sound changes, is nowadays regarded as an inferior sort of scholar. At the other end of the spectrum are humanists who feel that Ephraim is joined to idols and that the primary business of the humanities is to persuade mankind to come out from among them and be saved.

Reformation is always engaging. There is much to be said for it, especially when it takes pleasant and gentle form as it did in Castiglione's *The Courtier*. The fashioning of noble and virtuous men is an attractive aim, even if as an aim it is a little class-conscious. If ethics and beauty are not taught by humanists, the national life is bound to suffer, so much so that I doubt that the humanities, however defined, can ever be taught with the objectivity of mathematics. In contradiction to what I have said previously, it is quite possible to argue that the humanities specialize in virtue and are therefore bound in greater or less degree to be hortatory and didactic. American education would suffer if it were otherwise.

But the problem is one of tactics rather than of strategy, and I am beginning to wonder whether American humanists are good tacticians. We inherit the humanism of the North rather than the humanism of the Italian Renaissance, despite my examples a few pages back; yet it is a little surprising to see how content humanists are with denunciation. Take so familiar a document as Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* of 1570, which is among other things a furious

berating of papists, booksellers, Italians, schoolmasters, courtiers and vagabonds. Or take Matthew Arnold, with his insistence that because of Puritanism the British "have made the secondary the principal at the wrong moment, and the principal they have at the wrong moment treated as secondary." Take the American Irving Babbitt's wearisome insistence that there can be no health in twentieth-century America because in the eighteenth century mankind took the wrong turn with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Or take, in our age, the inexplicable attitude of humanists toward science. Let me, in this regard, analyze a specific pronouncement.

There has latterly appeared another anthology in which humanists try to make clear the mysteries of contemporary verse. The editors of it declare that modern poetry—by which they mean the kind of poetry they are anthologizing—deals with one great general problem, which, stated in broadest terms, is this: the conflict (or disparity) felt by any intelligent, sensitive person today between experience measurable or describable in the terms of physical science, and that immeasurable meaning of whatever sort which permeates experience in the form of value. As this generalization is not self-evident, they expand it.

There is a tendency, they say, to regard the physical picture of the world as the real one, and to regard any other picture of the world as illusory or relative. Accordingly, when the modern poet tries to create some other picture of the world—other, that is, than the world of physical science—he has to dramatize a sense of incompleteness, a feeling

of irrecoverable loss, a sense of existence without a spiritual center, compass, or equilibrium. Another statement in the introduction to the anthology is that, to the modern poet, the world is in a state of flux—what the editors call a sense of decay and transience, though this, they admit, is no new theme. But the modern state of flux, it appears, induces a special pathos because the world is now without meaning. Nature, which used to be a source of either comfort or wonder, is no longer a clue to something the editors call Ultimate Significance—a phrase they capitalize. History, they say, which in the nineteenth century developed a theory of progress, is now to the poet nothing but empty succession, exciting and random catastrophe. The world of values is a world of frustration, nescience, lack of meaning—the cause or the consequence of the decline of Christian faith. A poem like T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" or W. H. Auden's "For the Time Being"—I am still presenting the editorial point of view—expresses the emotions of our time.

In the Eliot poem the world is peopled with hollow men—persons whose heads are stuffed with straw, who speak only in tired voices, who live in a dead land, a cactus waste containing images of stone. They spend their time chanting:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.*

The Auden poem is a modern Christmas pageant which,

* From *Collected Poems, 1909–1935*. Copyright 1936 by Harcourt, Brace & Co. Published in Canada by Ryerson Press.

say the editors, dramatizes the chasm separating tangible and intangible values, communicates vividly a sense of transience and decay, pictures a nightmare of darkness, denies the possibility of innocent communion between man and nature, and repudiates the ideas of utopianism and progress. Let us analyze these assertions.

Because of the compartmentalization of knowledge, general statements made by literary humanists are rarely evaluated by anyone except literary humanists. But literary humanists in twentieth-century America are the products of *expertise*. Now the theory of the introduction I am analyzing has to do with science and with philosophy. Scientists, however, do not examine literary documents. The scientist assumes that since the language of science is technical, the language of literary analysis must be technical also and that he is therefore unfit to examine it. The philosophers generally like discourse to be neat and logical, but because literary language rarely achieves the neatness of epistemological theory, he inclines to look on literary persons as in the main amateur metaphysicians. For lack of critical analysis, therefore, literary discourse in American humanistic tradition is permitted to make assertions concerning philosophy and science not subject to competent review by anybody except literary humanists. Yet the gravity of the assertions, coupled with the persuasiveness of literary form, requires us to be especially cautious in accepting as truth, merely because it is literary, what literature asserts as truth, especially when, as in the present instance, it is the dogma of reproach.

What dogma is here presented? The editors assert that an intelligent, sensitive person today must feel the disparity which creates the central problem in contemporary poetry—the disparity or conflict between experience measurable or describable in the terms of physical science and that immeasurable meaning, of whatever sort, which permeates experience in the form of value. I cannot make out what is precisely meant by the last part of this statement, but let me begin with the intelligent, sensitive persons of today.

Who are these persons? The poets, obviously, and, one assumes, the editors. Who else? I do not know. The editors do not tell us. However, I know, as everybody else knows, scores of intelligent, sensitive persons who do not read the poems in question; or who, if they read, are bewildered by them; or who, if they are not bewildered, find nothing of lasting importance in the writers in question. For example, I have intelligent, sensitive Quaker friends who, troubled by the world, are not troubled by it in the terms set forth by the humanistic editors of this anthology. Clearly, then, their sweeping statement about intelligent, sensitive persons requires modification.

But what is meant by the phrase: "Experience measurable or describable in the terms of physical science"? Physical science is as old as poetry and has traditionally helped intelligent, sensitive persons of the caliber of Lucretius, Milton, and Goethe in the shaping of poetry. Apparently, then, some new and different experience measurable or describable in the terms of physical science has distressed modern

poets. But what this experience is, or how it differs from the past experience of former scientists the editors do not say.

Unless one is an expert scientist, and barring undergraduate courses in science, the experience of physical science most Americans actually have is with products of physical science like the telephone, the radio, the automobile, and the electric light. These are sometimes inconveniences and sometimes nuisances, but they are rarely the occasion for cosmic despair. The other experience measurable or describable in the terms of physical science and common to most Americans is experience with the healing arts of the physician and surgeon. For these experiences most patients are grateful and, far from inferring either skepticism or despair from such an experience, they infer, fairly enough, an increasing degree of humanitarianism among mankind.

The phrase about science must mean, then, that the editors and the poets have had some special experience measurable or describable in the terms of physical science, which has induced this cosmic despair. Does it mean that the poets and the editors have had experiences in biology or astronomy or chemistry or physics in some way denied either to scientists or to other intelligent, sensitive persons? If so, neither the editors nor the poets make clear what this experience is or has been.

Possibly, however, the phrase means that some poets have been unable to harmonize reports on the vastness and irrationality of the universe with their notions, imagined or inherited, about the purpose and plan of the universe. If

so, the editors do not clearly say so. Moreover, the enigma of the vastness of the universe and the insignificance of man is not the newest but the oldest of philosophical and poetic themes. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" If this is thought irrelevant because of its imputed Christian overtones, I cite, instead, Homer's view of the kingdom of the dead, Virgil's sense of tears in human things, the Anglo-Saxon writer who compared the life of man to a swallow flying in and out a lighted room at night, the vast anonymity of the universe in both Buddhist and Confucian thought, and the Persian poet translated by FitzGerald, who wrote:

Into this Universe, and *Why* not Knowing,
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

The editors and the poets, if the editors represent the poets correctly, seem unable to understand that the author of Ecclesiastes, the author of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, the authors of the Norse sagas, and the author (or authors) of the *Niebelungenlied* were living in universes quite as dismal as our own. *They* seem, however, commendably courageous in facing it.

The editors, humanists that they are, do not say so, but I infer that many poets are troubled by the discovery of nuclear fission. The invention of the atom bomb and its successor, the hydrogen bomb, and *its* successor, whatever that may be, gives them a special sense of guilt. They are

right to be troubled, of course. When the atom bomb was first used, it must not be forgotten, the scientists themselves raised the question of moral values, and the association of nuclear physicists has not wearied of calling attention to the frightful ethical problems of atomic warfare. Yet in the eyes of these poets and editors science is supposed to obliterate value judgments—that is, in this case, moral values. The inference about scientists does not seem consistent with the record of science. Humanists sometimes get around this awkward fact by saying of Dr. Einstein or Professor Urey or somebody like them, “Well, you see, he’s a good humanist.” Precisely, but he is a good scientist also.

These editors, and many humanists, go further. They imply that because of scientific research nature is no longer a clue to Ultimate Significance, but is merely a world in flux, a world in decay, the comfortless world of external nature.

I cannot speak for all scientists, but among those I know, and I know a good many, I have never heard one who talks like this about the universe—not even an astronomer, who penetrates more deeply into its abysses than do other scientists. The scientists, indeed, seem on the whole rather cheerful. Perhaps they are not the intelligent, sensitive persons the introduction brings before the reader, but they seem to go cheerfully about their duties, and some of them passionately demand that society improve. One maps out a whole scheme for the welfare state. Another spends his energies trying to enrich the food potential of Latin America and to stave off famine in India. A third is trying to induce cancer in plants in order to get rid of it in human

beings. A fourth wants to discover some commercially feasible way to purify sea water. All these examples are from a single university. Far from worrying whether the world is going to end with a bang or a whimper, these men and others like them, closest of all to experiences measurable or describable in the terms of physical science, find no difficulty in retaining meanings that give their experience value. In fact I see no good reason for preferring poets to scientists as daily companions, and some traditional reasons for preferring scientists!

Competent scientists, moreover, far from inferring that nuclear fission is no clue to Ultimate Significance, seem to consider nuclear fission the best clue to ultimate significance we have yet found. Mr. Fred Hoyle, for instance, in his book *The Nature of the Universe*, thinks that by way of atomic theory in an expanding universe one arrives at the notion of continuous creation. This was the opinion of Percy Bysshe Shelley when he wrote:

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.

The heart of things, in Mr. Hoyle's view, is energy—infinite, indestructible, timeless energy.

But this is what poets from Lucretius to William Blake have been constantly asserting. Consider, for example, John Milton. Milton built his hell out of ever-burning sulphur unconsumed, which looks suspiciously like a parallel to the

atomic pile, and may for that reason justify gloom among humanists. But Milton also raises God and the Son on heavenly mountains of pure energy—

a flaming Mount, whose top
Brightness has made invisible,

is his expression. The great hymn to light which opens Book Three of *Paradise Lost* refers to "bright effluence of bright essence increate." Milton tells us in *Comus* that nature has hung the stars in heaven and filled their lamps with everlasting oil, which I take to be a metaphor of energy; and when he launches the chariot of the Son in the heavenly battle against Satan, he equips it with such destructive power that not only are Satan and his army to everlasting ruin and combustion hurled, but the resulting explosion splits the universe in two! Perhaps it is a touch embarrassing to have modern science thus validate the guesses of a poet. Or does the embarrassment arise from the Christian theology involved? Milton's physics is merely imaginative physics, his poetry is merely Christian poetry, but one had thought that imagination, poetry, and Christianity were precisely the points at issue.

Dreadful as were Hiroshima and its companion disaster, they were as actual experiences of modern poets quite as imaginary as Milton's battle. The poets were not present, in either case. The Miltonic catastrophe was, however, seriously intended to create a place in which not only Satan and his followers but a vast majority of the human race were to suffer forever. Awful as Hiroshima was, it did not

last forever. In no sense that I can make out does nuclear fission as such present the poets and their editors with any personal experience measurable or describable in the terms of physical science, however it may have enkindled or depressed their imaginations. Yet the editors' phrase is "personal experience," which I can interpret only to mean individual experience of event.

It is, however, argued that if nature is simply endless energy, nature is therefore comfortless. We have lost, the humanists say (or these editors say for them), the old, natural warmth of the romantic movement and the nineteenth century—and one's thoughts go back to Mr. Trinkaus's analysis of the attitude of Renaissance humanism toward man and the universe. Upon examination, I think, the contemporary assertion is seen to require considerable modification. It is true that romantic poets like Wordsworth and Shelley, or, for that matter, Hugo and Goethe, postulate a friendly nature, just as it is true that historians like Macaulay and Bancroft, or, for that matter, Michelet and Niebuhr, postulate a friendly universe. But it is also true that Byron and Arnold as poets, or, for that matter, Baudelaire and Leopardi, postulate a nature indifferent or hostile to man, just as Carlyle and Henry Adams, or, for that matter, Treitschke, postulate a hostile universe, so that sweeping generalizations about the loss of nineteenth-century belief can be made only by leaving out a good deal of the nineteenth century. This is a scholarly problem. What immediately concerns us is the persons of sensitivity and in-

telligence who suffer from an irrecoverable sense of loss because nature is unfriendly.

Doubtless many do. But it is at least odd that precisely in these later decades when science has turned the universe into desolation, nature was never more popular. I do not know how many million persons visit the beaches every summer, or the national parks, or, for that matter, the parks in the cities. I do not know how many millions go camping or hunting or hiking or sailing or fishing every year, just as I do not know how many millions go skating or sledding or skiing or ice-boating. I do know that in my lifetime the Americans—and I think the people of Western Europe generally, if they were not so before—have become a race of sun worshipers. The Western world in the twentieth century has grown closest to the ancient Greeks in its delight in an outdoor existence. The Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the summer camps, the garden clubs, and other nature-loving organizations have developed precisely during the years when nature has become so unfriendly or meaningless as to destroy all faith among intelligent, sensitive persons. Yet not to have acquired a tan by September argues yourself at least undemocratic and probably uncultured. Either no intelligent, sensitive persons having an experience measurable or describable in the terms of physical science are found among these millions, or the term "nature" is misunderstood, or the statement is wrong. Let us look at the concept "nature."

The kind of nature that millions enjoy during summer and winter is perhaps not what the editors and the poets

of this anthology are talking about. What they have in mind is perhaps the infinite deeps of space and time. I confess, however, I can find nothing novel, nothing strange in this concept. Centuries ago it was observed that a thousand years are as yesterday and yesterday as a thousand years. In the presence of cosmic vastness you can, if you like, complain that the world ends with a whimper, which somehow seems either vainglorious or comic, or you can inquire with the author of the Book of Job:

Canst thou bind the chains of the Pleiades? Or loose the bands
of Orion?

.....
Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens?

Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth?

Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, That abundance of
waters may cover thee?

As a matter of fact, we are nearer getting an abundance of water out of the clouds today than we were some thousands of years ago, and know far more of the ordinances of the heavens than Job did.

Both the author of "The Hollow Men" and the author of the Book of Job are to be included, on any fair discrimination, among the intelligent, sensitive persons of the introduction. Confronted by similar phenomena, they reach opposite inferences. I see no reason to think that the author of "The Hollow Men," merely because he is modern, is superior in insight to the author of the Book of Job in his understanding of the universe. A rereading of so civilized

a poem as Virgil's *Aeneid* will reveal that a more superstition-ridden, a more unpredictable, a more cheerless world than that of the pious Aeneas cannot be easily imagined. Aeneas could count on nothing—neither on the operation of natural law, nor the protection of that unreasonable woman, the goddess Venus, nor his own foresight, nor the actions of his own men. One does not have to cry “Up Macaulay!” to doubt the validity of the indictment of science and the universe by some sorts of humanists in our time. We have at least got beyond Aeneas.

4

I have been thus lengthy in analyzing a particular “humanistic” pronouncement because it seems to show what happens when any group of learned men do not take the trouble to find out what other learned men are doing. The Americans cannot retain or restore the unity of knowledge by an internecine warfare among specialists. Humanists in the twentieth century are among the heirs, but they are not the sole residuary legatees, of humanists of the fifteenth century; and they can make no progress if they assume that because they inherit the title and some of the ideas of early scholars, they have a monopoly on wisdom and virtue. It is equally wrong for a scientist to assume (and some scientists assume it) that because they possess clear techniques of demonstration, all other knowledge than knowledge of mensuration is mere subjective matter of opinion. A poem or a painting may be as accurate a report on nature as a demonstration or an invention. Passionately to insist that

the humanities are mere talking departments is clearly wrong, but no more wrong than passionately to argue that you cannot understand science because it is too technical, yet in the name of reform or of return to the fountains of wisdom, simultaneously insist that science has wrecked the universe or deranged "values." Science is no more the cause of the modern predicament, if there be one, than is politics—statesmen, after all, must take responsibility for the atom bomb—and man is a political animal if one of the world's great humanists is to be believed.

A sense of despair has come over many hearts. Some humanists are likely therefore to retreat into religious mysticism. The cry of others, including poets, is that our times lack faith in religion. Perhaps we do, but the cry is old. It reverberates in the Old Testament, in the New, in the church fathers, in the pronouncements of medieval popes, in the denunciation of the church by Protestants, and in the denunciation of Protestantism by the Catholic Reformers. It has been urged by Edmund Burke, and by Newman, Matthew Arnold, Herman Melville and a score of other nineteenth-century worthies, and is being urged again. I have no desire to deny the comforts of religion to anyone, but of the retreat into religious mysticism by many "humanists" it is fair to observe that in all recorded time there is no instance where a culture has been preserved by mysticism alone. Even if the intelligent, sensitive persons in question were to flee like ancient monks into the deserts of Arizona, the problem of liberal culture would not be advanced. Civilization has been preserved by persons who

were not mystics and who were not even Christians; as, for example, the scholars of the Saracenic empire and the sages of China. It has even been preserved by illiterate men, as, for example, by the Emperor Charlemagne. But it has never been preserved by either despair or withdrawal.

One doubts, then, that a declaration of intellectual or emotional bankruptcy on the part of sensitive, intelligent persons will do very much in the way of strengthening the American version of Western humanism. The future lies, I suspect, not so much with specialists trained in humanistic *expertise* as with the inculcation of a humane point of view. To encourage quarrels among the learned—quarrels between humanists and social scientists, quarrels between humanists and scientists, quarrels between humanists and “educators”—gets us exactly nowhere. I doubt that anything is gained by tossing around honorific phrases like “value judgments” or pejorative phrases like “behavioristic psychology.” I suspect that the principal difference between science and humanism does not lie in imputing ideal values to the one and only self-regarding values to the other, but that the difference, in so far as the health of Western culture is concerned, lies rather in a way of approaching the human problem, particularly in regard to the temporal perspective in which knowledge is found.

III.

Humanism Dethroned: The Fallacy of Utility

THIS modest inquiry seems to have gone wildly astray. Beginning with the observation that contemporary American culture exhibits a dynamic quality that threatens to "take over" the cultural traditions of the West, we have inquired what differentiates the United States from Europe; and, rashly casting aside the comparative views of travelers and historians, we have argued that since knowledge in the New World descends from Renaissance humanism, an inquiry into what the Americans have done to knowledge may be as enlightening as any we can make. This has led us to an examination of higher education in the United States. In that realm humanism has been replaced by the humanities and the humanities come out as branches of specialism. The unity of learning has been broken into three divisions, and the only central concept remaining seems to be a doctrine of *expertise*. Unity therefore becomes unity of pursuit. If we ask why humanism has been dethroned, we are forced to inquire into the weakness of humanistic *expertise* in the

country, and this examination, however superficial, we have just concluded.

All this is to skirt a hundred perplexing problems. The assumption that the tradition of learning is central to the understanding of a culture is itself open to intelligent criticism. It is often said that the Americans are excellent at gadgets, at technical know-how, at all sorts of practical things, that this is their essential cultural characteristic, and that, contrariwise, they have no central philosophy about knowledge or anything else abstract. Consequently a low degree of pragmatism is all they have to offer the world. And in support of this allegation two historical truths can be urged. One is the breakdown in the United States at the beginning of the present century of the so-called genteel tradition—by which awkward phrase is meant the current of metaphysical and moral idealism in which the great Americans of the nineteenth century lived and moved. The second historical truth is that the attempt to revive this tradition on austerer lines in the twentieth century—the Neo-humanism of Babbitt, More, and their followers—got nowhere, or, rather, eventuated in the disillusioned neo-Calvinism now popular in the country as a return to religion. But a return to religion is not the same thing as humanism.

Moreover, an inquiry into the tradition of learning seems to ignore a common and useful mode of interpreting American culture: what may be called the mode of pragmatic social inquiry. A thousand observers, native and foreign, have watched American life in action and have come up

with a great quantity of shrewd conclusions about it. The monotony, or leveling quality, of American life, the kindliness of Americans, the "mom complex" in the contemporary republic, American suspicion of the highbrow, American tolerance, American intolerance, American materialism, American idealism—who does not know these and other sociological descriptions? These inferences vary from decade to decade, from region to region, from interest to interest, from traveler to traveler. Inevitably they contradict each other. They seem, many of them, to be results rather than operative causes, and therefore they do not help us very much. Among other difficulties, many of these observations seem to apply with equal force to other countries. Kindliness, for example, is universal among the Russians, if we are to believe observers; materialism can be alleged with equal cogency against the French; and as for the "mom complex," though it is not currently applied to the British, any study of the domestic fiction read by the Victorians could pile up evidence for a morbid parent-child relationship. Penetrating as many observers are, they do not always essentially separate the New World from the Old.

And then of course there is art. Does not the soul of a people express itself most directly in the national arts? In general, yes; but it is also commonplace that the history of the arts in America is a complicated and rather special history of adaptation. What in America does a given art express? Is, for example, the music of Edward MacDowell "American"? Nowadays people don't think so. Clearly, it is not "American" if "Americanism" is identified with the

walk-around of the Negro minstrel show or the products of Basin Street. But if these two manifestations of music in America express only a particular race, class, audience, and situation as they seem to do, why does not the same argument hold, *pari passu*, of MacDowell and his generation? In sum, the arts in America are not the same as American art. Cultivated Americans, told, let us say, in London that the language of Mark Twain or Sinclair Lewis is notably or uniquely characteristic of the United States, are likely to receive this assertion with a certain reserve. To them the language of William or Henry James is no less characteristic of cultivated life at home. The question of our speech is not to be settled by an appeal only to Will Rogers or Al Capp.

Humanism, higher education, the academic universe, research activity, the pursuit of specialisms, the theory that learning is, or should be, above partisanship and nationalism—these are of course not American inventions. They are as essentially importations as the novel, the Christian religion, or the architecture of the national capital. Indeed, the more one studies history, the more difficult it becomes to define the essentially American thing, though I shall presently struggle with the problem. But the American situation has had, it is clear, differing effects upon differing elements in Old World culture when these have been adapted to New World life, and it would seem that what has happened to education in the United States, particularly at its higher levels (elementary education is pretty much the same around the globe) comes closer to exhibiting a *sui generis* quality than anything else American outside the political sphere. This has come about

in the United States because the rapid conquest of a raw environment was possible only when knowledge was viewed as an instrument rather than as an end. And inasmuch as in this sense humanism was (and is) an end and not an instrument, the American situation in this area is virtually unique. Let us then return to our analysis of American university life.

2

American academic institutions differ from their Old World counterparts in innumerable ways, but I shall instance only two of these differences as being relevant to the decline of humanism and the fractation of knowledge. One is the greater American emphasis upon the departmental system. The second is that curious creation, the American graduate school.

The organization of the faculty into departments has in the United States all the air of inevitability, like the weather, or death. In a world of specialisms, what more natural than that specialists shall be grouped together for two purposes: first, that they may bring their specialized knowledge to bear upon a common problem; and second, that they may train more specialists to take their places when they retire? In college and university therefore—I confine myself to the faculty of arts and sciences—departmental organization has become the supreme fact in faculty life. Budgets are made out for departments—that is, the budget for the college is assembled for, or from, the departments. Appointments and promotions originate in departments. Special funds are fre-

quently allocated to departments. And in faculty meetings the phrase "my department" or "in *my* department" is more commonly heard than the phrase "the faculty of arts and sciences ought."

Moreover, as the years go by, departmental organization tends to become more and more fixed, despite theoretical revolt against it. In some institutions it even extends to the veto power; that is, if Professor X in department A proposes to offer a course that seems to infringe upon the special prerogatives of department B, Professor Y, the chairman of department B, goes to the dean, exposes the intellectual raid, and causes the poacher to be once more confined to his proper paddock. Even physical equipment like visual aids, projectors, classrooms, books, and specimens is sometimes jealously guarded as the property of the department rather than the possession of the institution.

This analysis is, I think, accurate. But constitutional theory is otherwise. Theoretically the department is only a committee of the faculty—the faculty of arts and sciences—and could be dissolved by that faculty if occasion arise. In theory the department therefore does not differ from the committee on honorary degrees or the committee on student activities. Theory, however, ignores two basic facts: first, the committee on honorary degrees has no budget to spend; and second, members of the teaching staff are not appointed to a department of honorary degrees, but to the department of their specialism.

Educational theory is at this juncture at cross purposes with educational fact. The bachelor of arts degree is the-

oretically administered by the whole faculty and is supposed to be guarded by general rules. These rules usually desiderate that the first two years of a college course shall be devoted to general training, now sometimes synonymous with "general education"; and assume that only in the last two years is the student to become a specialist—that is, to concentrate his work in the department of his choice. Apparently, however, the theory does not work. It has been difficult to impress future specialists—say, young chemists, or beginning engineers, or future economists—with the necessity of suffering instruction in foreign languages, English literature, philosophy, the rudiments of composition—the humanities, in sum—before they enter upon the careers they came to college to pursue; and, as a kind of indirect confession of the bankruptcy of theory, colleges install courses in general education to attain the aims of a degree in the liberal arts. But as somebody has to administer and teach "general education," and since the department system has not been abolished, the resulting paradox is the creation of a new, rather larger department—the "staff" in general education. Specialists take over the scheme that was originally designed to end the evils of specialism.

Other devices are also employed to get around the fundamental fact of departments. Committees composed of members from several departments are created to administer degree programs which include more than one department or which lie outside departmental lines. Here again, something is probably gained, but here again the fact of departmentalism is still central—the committee has to beg,

buy, or borrow instruction from well-entrenched departments, members of which by and by begin to wonder whether the program in question could not be quite as well administered within departmental lines as without. Moreover, inequities in the teaching load by and by appear. Professor C confines himself to canonical departmental work, whereas Professor D takes on work in the new degree programs either as an extra assignment or as a substitute for a proper departmental course; and since the work of the department may suffer either way and is commonly supposed to suffer whether it does so or not, the fortunes of Professor D within the department are not always consonant with the degree of altruism displayed by him in assisting general educational development.

Finally it is to be observed that the recruitment of members of the faculty is really the recruitment of members of departments. Presidents and deans look, as they say, for broad-gauged men, but the broad-gauged man has to fit in somewhere, which means that he has to fit into a department. The department is naturally inclined to look at his broad-gauge qualities as somewhat less interesting than the question whether the courses he proposes to give blanket somebody else's course, and whether his appointment will, as the phrase goes, meet the needs of the department. The needs of the department commonly imply that such and such a specialism has developed, or lacks, man power; and that, consequently, the gap in the ranks is to be filled with the primary purpose of presenting a unified front to the dean and the financial vice-president.

So much for the fundamental organization of American faculties of arts and sciences. If we look at another important aspect of their professional lives, we confront the puzzle of the graduate school of arts and sciences. In the long run, the graduate school is the most influential single element in American education and conceivably in American culture, but the paradox is that it really does not exist. Other professional schools—law, medicine, engineering, business administration, public health, dentistry, theology—have their own faculties, their own deans, their own budgets, their own autonomous status within the framework of a university. The graduate school of arts and sciences, which clearly pretends to be a professional school, inasmuch as it trains professional scholars and scientists, does not, in most American institutions, have its own budget except in a sense so limited as to be meaningless; and though it has a dean, the status of this administrative head is so ambiguous that in many institutions he is really confined to a few formal functions.

When I remark that the graduate school of arts and sciences has no faculty, I do not ignore the truth that in some institutions appointment to the faculty of arts and sciences does not automatically carry with it membership in the graduate faculty and therefore the privilege of guiding research work and graduate instruction. This privilege usually comes later in the career of the younger scholar or scientist. A distinction between the graduate faculty and the undergraduate faculty is therefore said to exist. But even though a mild differentiation may separate the younger

member of the college from members of the faculty offering graduate instruction, the difference does not create a special professional faculty, all of whose activities are solely directed towards professional training leading to a professional degree. The same faculty in arts and sciences simultaneously administers the liberal arts curriculum, including general education, and specialized training leading to the doctor's degree, a double responsibility not carried by the faculty in law, or engineering, or medicine, or any other professional school.

What, then, is the nexus which connects the faculty considered as the faculty in arts and sciences, with the faculty considered as members of the graduate faculty? If by the phrase "arts and sciences" or the phrase "bachelor of arts" or its equivalent, we mean that liberal culture based on humanism which the liberal college exists in theory to give, it seems evident that the one thing which does *not* connect the faculty as a graduate faculty with the faculty as the faculty of arts and sciences, is the arts and sciences. This curious paradox follows from the assumption that liberal training in the arts and sciences is not, whatever else it may be, a specialist's training in some one of the arts or some one of the sciences, whereas the assumption of graduate training is precisely the opposite, the assumption of *expertise*. The graduate school exists for the professional purpose of administering a liberal education. Perhaps the two aims are not incompatible. Perhaps a principle of reconciliation can be found. But current discussion of liberal education, particularly discussion by humanists about the

humanities as a surrogate for humanism, assumes that the two aims cannot be reconciled in the same faculty.

The nexus is not, then, the formal fact of the existence of a faculty of arts and sciences, the nexus is, again, the departmental system. We do not characteristically have in America a unified, over-all graduate school in a given university, the catalogue to the contrary notwithstanding; what we have is as many graduate schools as there are departments offering graduate degrees. These several graduate schools are held together by a few external regulations governing residence requirements, foreign languages, the title pages of dissertations, and so on, but beyond these and the requirement that the student applying for entrance into the graduate school must have a bachelor's degree, everything else of importance is left to the departments. The department determines what the candidate shall study, and whether his work is to be done wholly within the department or mainly there (that is, there may be a "minor" in a "related field"). The department is the judge of accomplishment in the doctoral thesis, which means that it adjudges not only the content and value of the dissertation but its formal quality as well—that is, the standards of style and presentation. The department in fact, whatever the theory, examines the candidate; and in some universities a designated member of the department walks with the candidate to the platform at the graduation ceremonies and helps him don his doctoral hood. Finally, the department is the chief instrument in getting employment for the young Ph.D.

It is a fair gloss on this situation that American belief in

expertise is the efficient cause of this general educational dilemma. The departmental system arises in the name of efficiency and practical logic. How else are the experts to operate without waste of time? But this development, whatever its cause, has taken the American university a long distance from an original concept of a philosophical faculty, the concept that is still, at least in theory, the governing principle of the European university. The bewilderment of European students visiting the United States, used to the freer atmosphere of the European university, and confronting for the first time the strait-jacket regulations of departmental requirements and specialist degree programs, is ample evidence of the divergence developing between the two continents in their attitudes toward knowledge.

3

I have spoken of the confusion of terminology in which American educational discussion is carried on. There is another confusion, or, to change the figure, another cleavage in the functions of the departmentalized faculty of arts and sciences. The liberal arts college traditionally regards itself as the true home of liberal education. But the professional schools outside the faculty of arts and sciences take a different point of view, as do also even some of the professionalized departments within that faculty. On the one hand these bodies tend to regard the liberal college as a service institution teaching the rudiments of language, science, mathematics, history, and philosophy; and on the other hand, partly in exasperation, partly in humility, they

say to the college: "It is not our business to administer the elements of polite learning. Therefore, since society thinks it necessary that some common body of traditional lore be acquired, take these young people for, say, two years and see what you can do with them before they come to us."

This points to a curious confusion about the faculty of arts and sciences. This confusion has to do with departments; yet, though it concerns general education in a vague sort of way, it does not make general education its proper aim. The beginning chemist, doctor, or engineer is, as we have seen, commonly impatient with the delay imposed by this rule upon his professional training, so that unfavorable comparison is drawn between the zeal with which he throws himself into professional studies, and the languor with which, in the college of arts and sciences, he acquires in departments of the humanities such rudiments as grammar, elementary French, and the spelling of names like Leonardo da Vinci.

The assumption that one of the primary duties of the college of arts and sciences is to teach the rudiments of certain humanities, particularly the rudiments of the English language, is common also in the business world. Businessmen declare that employees in the higher echelons, graduates of technological patterns of education, need to be "broadened," and latterly business has taken to doing its own broadening by setting up institutions mainly humanistic in intent, for the retraining, or the advanced training, of members of the staff who have some degree of managerial responsibility. The arts, especially literature, are

thought to reveal human nature, or to make the student, especially if he is mature, a wiser man, or to increase his reading habit in order to enrich his leisure. The humanist can scarcely complain; and if the assumptions of business went no further than to say that the principal purpose in teaching the humanities is the enrichment of adult leisure, possibly no great amount of harm would be done.

But harm, unfortunately, is done. The harm arises from the undue emphasis upon the teaching function of the humanities. Scholarship as an end in itself cannot thrive in a universe of discourse which assumes that the only purpose of humane studies is "teaching," for the obvious reason that a subject perpetually taught and never refreshed turns stale. The slow and infinite delicacies of the learning process are, in this well-meant endeavor, sacrificed to *expertise*; that is, the scholar in humanism exists only as a teacher because the curriculum in which he performs exists only as a mode of increasing the human efficiency of businessmen. That the human (and for that matter, the humane) efficiency of businessmen can be desirably increased is probably true, just as it is true that the humanities, in one aspect, are an admirable instrument for the enrichment of personality. But this is quite another thing from the pursuit of scholarship in the same spirit as that in which scientific research is pursued. The work of the American Classical School at Athens is not done in order to retrain American businessmen; and the spectacle of Spinoza or Aristotle, Burckhardt or Gibbon, Sainte-Beuve or Walter Pater as deserving support in proportion as they are useful tutors to the vice-

president in charge of sales has its comic aspects. It misses the whole point of humanistic scholarship.

That point is grossly missed. The industrial executive who invests his profits in a research laboratory, proudly boasting that he is not looking for "practical" results, wants basic research to go forward with no check from him, and does not pretend to evaluate the results—who is he to contradict the magician in the white coat?—will, with no sense of inconsistency, argue that an international encyclopedia of music is only for highbrows, refuse to back humanistic research because it is useless (that is, has no immediate social or economic applicability), ask some scholarly organization why it doesn't support living painters and poets instead of busying itself with old books and manuscripts, and label as pedantic whatever he cannot understand that has to do with past time. This, of course, is the extreme case. It is fortunately also true that enlightened businessmen have passed beyond these simplicities. Ask the presidents of certain corporations, however, why, if they pay out considerable sums to consultants in personnel management, labor relations, and economic analysis, they should not pay out equal sums for the support of a metaphysician, a philosopher, and a literary historian, and you will stagger them.

Perhaps the most engaging of these *niaiseries* is the attitude toward what is known as "English." English is "broadening," but it is also vocational. The primary responsibility of "English" is "grammar," and grammar implies correct spelling, proper punctuation, and idioms the employer recognizes as "correct." It also implies the ability "to speak on

one's feet," and the humanities, particularly the department of English, "ought to" teach these things, and are grossly negligent if they do not. The United States, as a result of this pressure, is the only nation in the world in which an enormous corps of instructors are perpetually doing at the college level what no college ought to be expected to do.

That speech habits are the result of nature and nurture, that a thousand forces in American life daily and hourly operate against schoolma'am English, that "good English" results from years of exposure to books and intelligent conversation at home and among one's peer group, that the gap between the professional scholar in language and literature and the majority of high school graduates is immense and that it cannot be bridged among adolescents, nor the accepted colloquialisms of eighteen years be radically altered, by the artifice of "themes" or classes meeting fifty minutes a day for three days a week is as evident as that dictionaries are recording, not legislative, compilations, spelling a convention imposed by eighteenth-century printshops, and punctuation a queer compound of logic, tradition, and personal idiosyncrasy. Yet higher education is somehow mysteriously expected to work a miracle in speech, an expectation that seems only natural to the sales manager who impatiently dictates an illiterate letter and then says his stenographer will straighten it out!

Stress upon the service function of the English department is not unique. Mathematics, foreign languages, history ("we oughtta make everybody take a course in American history")—other departments also have to fulfill a similar

service demand. Professional schools, moreover, do little to check this idea. The business of the English department is to "teach English," a duty that relieves other departments from all responsibility for clarity or grace in the spoken or written language. So it is that the service function of the humanities clouds their intellectual goal.

From the perpetual iteration of elementary information, mature humanists retreat into upper levels of instruction, denying that the equivalent of the three R's is the primary definition of the humanities. Their academic security increases in proportion as they concern themselves, first, with an "advanced" course and then with graduate instruction, and the progression is justified by the assertion that the mature should teach the maturing. Logically, then, it would seem, the true home of the humanities is the graduate school. Few who are acquainted with graduate instruction are inclined to make this claim; yet, if the graduate school is not the proper locus of the humanities, that locus is indeed difficult to discover. Once again, American inability to distinguish among humanism, the humanities, humanistic scholarship, and a humane education beclouds the issue. Graduate schools may or may not be humane institutions (if they are institutions at all), but they are emphatically professional institutions. It is there, and there only, that one learns the methods and the aims of scholarship. The fact that it is a far cry from the methods and the aims of scholarship to modes of teaching freshmen the rudiments of language is sometimes made to imply that the development of a humane teacher may be at cross purposes with the ac-

quirement of scholarly techniques, and points once more to American confusion about the humanities. Older members of the faculty of arts and sciences guard with commendable jealousy the commitment of graduate education to professional training at the same time that deans and presidents by-pass or minimize professional training in their search for persons who can "teach."

But what is humanistic teaching? If scholarship is not what Sir Philip Sidney would call the ending end of the humanities, is one to infer that an "appreciation" of the arts in human life is what the humanities are to achieve? Many talk as if this were so. In that event the American school of education, which is far closer to actual American life than is the faculty of arts and sciences, particularly in its graduate aspects, ought to be thoughtfully inspected as the professional or cultural home of humane teaching. I reveal no secret when I say, however, that this is the last admission most humanists will ever make. For them the school or college of education is almost the lowest form of academic life, and the last ten years has seen a surge of scholarly rebellion against the control of American education by professional educators. The same decade has also seen some increase in the prestige and influence of professors of the philosophy of educational tests and measurements, but, alas! the school of education has also gone in for *expertise*, and presents the same occupational maladies as does most of the rest of the learned world. Unkind critics refer to pedagogical *expertise* as pseudo-science.

4

American discussion of liberal education is, then, forever ambiguous. There is a tendency, of course, to set up liberal education, general education, or the humanities on one side, and to oppose them to something else that is never quite defined, though the nineteenth century commonly used the term "servile education." Vocational education has sometimes been made virtually synonymous with servile education; and sometimes it is vaguely assumed that the training of technologists or of scientists must be in itself something inferior to the training of humanists, or, if not that, then inferior to a Platonic ideal of a liberal culture. The present tripartite division of learning, moreover, tends to thrust the social scientists and the scientists into spheres unilluminated or uncontaminated by the humanities.

This suggestion of a pejorative classification naturally outrages any scientist of standing, for he properly feels not only that an acquaintance with science is quite as fundamental to anybody's education as an acquaintance with literature, but also that the sciences have done quite as much for human welfare as have the arts and philosophy. But if science thus acquires virtue, shall we now impute superiority to science and the humanities and take it away from the social sciences? Several difficulties appear, of which not the least is the definition of the social sciences. More important is it to realize that if man is a political animal, he is quite properly the subject of the social sciences, and that half or more than half of the great intellectual

classics of Western culture belong as certainly to the social sciences as they do to the humanities.

When great issues become confused, it is helpful to return to first principles. The tripartite division of learning has become a commonplace, like the departmental system related to it; yet neither the one nor the other has been fixed for all time, and the tripartite division of learning may itself be fallacious. Let us examine the reasons for thinking so.

The qualities commonly thought of as springing from, or associated with, humane learning do not seem to be confined to humanists but are equally divided among men excellent in science, in social science, and in humanistic learning. Contrariwise, it would be difficult to prove that scientists and social scientists possess humane quality in less degree than humanists do, or that the reason for their presumed inferior status inevitably lies in the nature of their training. The weaknesses of *expertise* are common to all three branches of knowledge. Moreover, if the distinction among the three areas of learning is a distinction arising from method, I find it difficult to discover what that distinction may be.

I have looked at articles by mathematicians purporting to solve equations "elegantly," which is an aesthetic term, and I have read books purporting to reduce aesthetic theory to mathematical form. When a medical specialist talks about a "classic" case of abdominal surgery or a "beautiful" diagnosis, I doubt that he is merely borrowing language; I think he is making a valid statement in medical research. Moreover, humanistic study is as frequently "scientific" as

not. Linguistics is a case in point; nor can I see any essential methodological difference between the way an art expert determines that a canvas is a forgery and the way a biologist determines the classification of a new fish. The view of the universe which led the ancient writer to exclaim "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" does not seem to differ in emotional tone from the declaration of a modern astronomer that the universe is "finer in concept and design than anything we could ever have arrived at by a random guess." I am unable radically to differentiate between the imaginative vision of Goethe or Dante and the imaginative vision of Newton or Einstein, and I doubt that Milton's cosmos has some mysterious quality lacking in Lyell's *Principles of Geology* or Darwin's *Origin of Species*, neither of which denies the existence of God. Doubtless Dante's or Milton's universe is more poetical, doubtless it is the immediate product of a divine artificer, but the question concerns the truth of the universe, not the beauty of the poetry nor the idealism of either theism or Christian theology as opposed to the possible agnosticism of later interpretation. Even of agnosticism, which is at least honest, the nineteenth century (as witness Andrew Dixon White) quoted with proper relevance the Scriptural injunction that you shall know the truth, and truth shall make you free. Moreover, Lucretius's atoms, like his *alma dea genetrix*, are as much the object of humane study as Dante's Christian hell.

Humanists on their side are fond of quoting the Latin tag which runs: *Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum*

puto. One may applaud the generous intent of the apothegm without finding it a valuable aid to definition. Putting aside the knowledge, instinctual or otherwise, of animals, one may say that all knowledge is human, and certainly whatever its ultimate source, all rational knowledge is the possession or the creation of man, so that the humanist, if he followed Terence and Cicero literally, would have to know everything. This is both impractical and absurd, and makes no distinction among knowledges.

I am neither a metaphysician nor a scientist, and I have had but imperfect training in the liberal arts, but I venture to suggest that organized knowledge, especially as the universities and colleges deal with it, polarizes itself around two points, not three—a distinction I owe to Pascal. The focus of one kind of learning is primarily mensurative; that of the other, historical. Both are the products of men. But in the one set of disciplines the search for objective truth is a search to reduce the human equation to zero, whereas in the other set of disciplines, which take time and history into account, though accuracy is essential, the purpose is, or seems to be, primarily to explicate the human situation. Neither kind of knowledge exists in pure form, each shares some of the attributes of the other, and both are socially and individually useful. Neither sort of learning is better than its rival, both make for human welfare or ought so to do, and each has its characteristic abuses.

A year or so ago the *Scientific American* devoted most of an issue to automation—that is, to explaining the ways by which scientific and technical processes can be carried on

with a minimum of intervention by human beings. One photograph showed an oil-cracking establishment so beautifully governed by a variety of mechanisms that, save for a regular look at dials and other recording apparatuses, no human action is normally needed. Such a creation, product of science and engineering, springs from two opposed, yet allied, motives: one is economy, which is only another name for selfishness, and the other is efficiency, or the elimination of human error.

Modern telescopes, by taking wonderful photographs of the heavens, eliminate the human equation—that is, the fallibility of the astronomer. Our vast calculating machines eliminate error, fatigue, and the unnecessary consumption of time. The great discovery that chemical processes can be recorded in formulae without regard to the chemist was a discovery that eliminated time in the sense that it moves in that direction where all knowledge of measurement approaches the condition of a perpetual present tense. Such knowledge strives for a sort of nonhuman (conservative humanists say, inhuman) validity. Ours is a great mensurative age, the greatest the world has ever known; and refinements of calculation, usually made by machines, perpetually move toward the elimination of human labor and human error.

The romancer, catching some glimpse of this clear, impersonal world, spins his yarn about a chill, push-button civilization, which puzzles the scientist; and a good many humanists incline to think of the world of the mathematician, the physicist, the chemist, the engineer, and the

astronomer as resembling the dead black cold of space. The scientist is baffled by such an assumption. For him his world is filled with the most exciting intellectual adventure. I envy him his adventure and wish I could participate in it. But like other humanists I cannot do so for lack of training. All I can enjoy is an occasional brief popular report from huge cloudy universes of the utmost importance, that I shall never know. This brilliant world is not the world of the humanities.

But there is another kind of knowledge—knowledge of man in time. To knowledge of man in time one adds of course our knowledge of time before man appeared. Much, but not all, such learning is warm, human, historical, and to be comprehended without the mensurative process necessary to the other sort of learning. The whole dependence of this knowledge, its whole significance is a function of time rather than of quantity (at least at the primary level); its meaning is a genetic meaning valuable in proportion as it clarifies the human story in terms of development or change. History is of this order of knowledge; so is our knowledge of, and through, the arts; so likewise, though it stand at the borderline of mortality and peer into the infinite, is knowledge gained through philosophy and theology. Our knowledge of society is also of this sort, no matter how impersonal or timeless that knowledge purports to be. When, for example, we speak of the economy of the anthill or the beehive, we do not mean by economy anything as human as what we mean when we speak of an economy of abundance. The anthill and the beehive, once the occasion of moral lessons

from Aesop to Queen Victoria, are, indeed, now used to frighten us with the prospect of a slavish, mechanized world, which lacks the genial qualities of human folly. But human folly, like human striving, is, we think, the very substance of knowledge of society.

The distinction is simple and may appear superficial—the humanist's cunning way of appropriating the social sciences and such sciences as geology and paleontology. But the distinction, like other simple distinctions, can also be profound. Humanistic learning is not a set of courses, a set of departments, or a set of specialties, just as scientific learning is not a set of courses, a set of departments, or mechanical *expertise*. Humanism, like science, is a point of view. Neither science nor humanism is better than the other. Both are parts of society, of education, and of the ever going forward of man.

At this point both the scientist and the historian intervene. They tell us, with much cogency, that the development of exact science is as much a portion of history as the development of the arts, and this is true. The wonderful story of investigative and inventive genius that gave us the exquisite instruments of mathematical analysis we now employ for tasks ranging from astrophysics to advertising appeal is as essential to history as the story of literary genius. But science is not the same as the history of science, and it is not merely rhetorical to say that the continuing aim of mathematical analysis is the elimination of mathematicians, paradoxically because mathematics is a great human invention we are forever trying to transcend. The mathematician labors in

the light of eternity, even when he has passed far beyond Euclidean geometry. So, in some sense, do all scholars, including the geologist. But the geologist, though he desires accuracy and though the history of the rocks would be the same if mankind vanished tomorrow, is nevertheless committed to history both in the sense that his data are temporal and in the sense that what he does has a special human cachet. The condition of the globe before mankind was such-and-such, and when it became so-and-so, mankind appeared. By and by it is possible that man will vanish. But all this merely established geological history from a particular, not from an eternal, point of view. Moreover, many of the other earth sciences—one thinks of geography and petrology—owe their existence to social need. I suspect the study and prediction of earthquakes would be of small interest to earthworms. I suspect also, of course, that basic research in chemistry owes quite as much to the practical demands of industry and the humanitarian demands of medicine as it owes to the intellectual love of God. But what I am trying to get at is polarity, not mode.

One element arising from the tripartite division of knowledge that comforted the old-line humanist is the assumption that the sciences deal only with quantitative measurements, whereas the humanities are distinguished by value judgments, the social scientists falling somewhere between, and from this it has been inferred that scientists (and many social scientists) are of one order of intelligence, humanists of another. The distinction between mensurative knowledge and knowledge in time seems at first sight to emphasize this

fallacy. Fallacy it is. Professor Joseph Strayer told the American Council of Learned Societies some months ago:

There are no "values" inherent in the humanities; not even the search for "values" is constant. We find artists who renounced beauty and writers who denounced style; we can find mere animal enjoyment and pure aesthetic withdrawal. We do not even derive the same "values" from the same studies. Did Aretino and Woodrow Wilson get the same "values" from the study of the Latin classics? The humanities offer excellent opportunities for making value judgments, but we bring our standards with us when we study the humanities; we do not derive our standards from them.

Similarly, the knowledge of truth is a value judgment, the desirability of pursuing truth is another value judgment, and the desirability of an unbiased statement of truth is a third. But these are characteristic of scientific training, and it seems evident that the polarity of learning does *not* throw value judgments into the field of historical knowledge and deprive exact science of value judgments.

The fundamental poles of knowledge seem to be knowledge of man and knowledge of measurement. Neither exists in a pure state. Man may be considered a thing, just as his body is, for physiological purposes, a corporeal thing; and, contrariwise, knowledge of things is of immense benefit to man. Knowledge of things leads to knowledge of man, and knowledge of man leads to knowledge of things. This simple truth should not lead to the distrust of science not uncommon among some humanists, nor to the hostility to social science, particularly sociology and social psychology, openly

acknowledged by others. The humanities and the social sciences have no occasion for quarreling: their common purpose is knowledge of man. This knowledge comes to them mainly, though not wholly, in the context of time—that is, it is characteristically historical knowledge, or springs from that sort of learning. Contrariwise, though there may be such matters as pure poetry or absolute music, neither the concept nor the content of such abstracts is comprehensible in terms of pure space or of eternity. Only as one understands antecedent cultural conditions can one understand any phase of any art. If American social scientists have abandoned that abstraction, the economic man of British classical theory, who was a queer, anticipatory analogue of pure poetry and absolute music, they have abandoned him because they see more and more clearly that, whatever else economics may be, it is as much a function of human psychology as it is a function of the rediscount rate. It is sheer folly for humanists, primarily interested though they may be in the development of the arts or of philosophy, to pretend that sociologists are pious frauds. The individual artist may be lonely, but the arts universally have meaning only in their social context, and are no more the possession of the humanist than of anybody else. Not artificial division but point of view is here cogent; and I suggest that knowledge of man in and through history may be the place to look for the unifying lost element we began by desiring.

IV.

The Substance of Humanism

WE BEGAN with an inquiry into the probable nature of the "American century." We have come out with a discussion of the curious notion among American businessmen that the test of scholarship is that it shall improve sales letters and relations in the personnel department. Yet it is not whimsical to observe that a culture is known by its correspondence. Letter-writing is as good an index to civilization as a variety of other matters—the status of women, for example, or the relation of church and state, or property values, or the arts. Not to make grandiose appeals to Pliny, or the *Epistolae Obscurum Virorum*, or Madame de Sévigné, or Charles Lamb, there is irony in the fact that the Americans worship great political figures principally in their correspondence. Take, for example, the majestic *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, planned for fifty or sixty volumes of six or seven hundred pages each. This vast library is principally letters, "the richest treasure house of historical information ever left by a single man," says Gilbert Chinard, who ought to know. The editors tell us that his vast correspondence "may be taken as being the best single gate-

way to the eighteenth century in America and to the manifold hopes then stirring the minds of men that reason and justice could be substituted for authority and superstition in guiding human affairs." What sort of gateway to the twentieth century will be furnished by the correspondence of United States Steel, or the International Business Machines company, or even university presidents, should it survive, is beyond conjecture.

Thomas Jefferson was a humanist. He was not trained, he was educated. He did not think the purpose of education was business correspondence. He never heard of a broadening and finding course in modern languages, much less of "appreciation," or the worthy use of leisure time, or motivation, or even of departments, specialism, or the graduate school. If you read his celebrated letter to Peter Carr of August 19, 1785, in the eighth volume of the *Papers*, you will find in it nothing about student rating of professors. Peter Carr (at the age of fifteen!) is enjoined to believe that "the acquisition of science [i.e., knowledge] is a pleasing employment" for its own sake—something Americans nowadays will not commonly admit except under the pressure of crossword puzzles and giveaway programs. "The possession of it," writes Jefferson, "is what (next to an honest heart) will above all things render you dear to your friends, and give you fame and promotion in your own country." An honest heart is the first blessing, a knowing head is the second. Jefferson casually opens before Peter Carr a library far more difficult to master than the contemporary "Great Books" enterprise—and concerning *that*

library a recent advertisement says it will give you entertainment because "all the research has been done for you." Jefferson, however, says nothing about the research having been done for Peter Carr; he expects Peter Carr to do it for himself. He merely advises Peter to divide his study time into three parts, "giving the principal to history, the other two, which should be shorter, to Philosophy and Poetry." He tells him to go to bed betimes and to take a great deal of exercise, preferably walking. The only utilitarian tinge is in the advice that if you want to get into the diplomatic service of the United States, you had better master French and Spanish. "When your mind shall be well improved with science, nothing will be necessary to place you in the highest points of view but to pursue the interests of your country, the interests of your friends, and your own interests also with the purest integrity, the most chaste honour. The defect of these virtues can never be made up by all the other acquirements of body and mind." Once again it should be said that when the eighteenth century wrote "science," it meant knowledge in general. "Science" was "natural philosophy." Otherwise this statement of American humanism is as clear today as when it was written.

Sometime between the era of Peter Carr's education and the present frenetic demand that higher education shall turn out as "products" an increasing number of engineers for the age of automation, American faith that the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake is a normal human employment virtually disappeared. A shrewd friend of mine alleges that it weakened with the disappearance from the American

academic world of the clergyman college president, who was replaced either by the businessman, the publicist, or the professional administrator. However antiquated his theology, the clergyman president retained an aura of sanctity that extended to his books. The ministerial library, filled with volumes in esoteric tongues and mysterious with formulae that he alone could operate, did not differ from the library of the scholar, equally esoteric, equally incomprehensible. A doctrine of the secret protected all scholarship; and precisely as a Roderick Usher could addle his weak head over the remarkable library of erudition Poe assembles for him, so any other bookish expert might acquire, or seem to acquire, magic. Even as late as Andrew Dickson White's *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* the power of the book was at least equal to the power of the laboratory. It was not exalted doctrine, but at least it protected learning.

When, about the opening of the twentieth century, the American high school passed from under the power of the American college, the prestige of the book immediately declined. College entrance requirements had been college entrance requirements, answering to no immediate social utility, existing as stately but unquestioned formulae. Now the cry of the teen-ager, "What do you want me to study that old stuff for?" was echoed by the "educator," who asked, "What good is it?" meaning: what purpose is served for democracy, or individual development, or mental health, or vocational training, by elementary French, or Virgil, or geometry, or ancient history, or, for that matter, the classics

of English and American literature? "Reading" became "functional"; literature disappeared. The wisdom of the past dwindled into training for the present, until today, no American high school student can comprehend what Peter Carr read in 1785. For that matter, neither can any American college student.

The question: "What good is it?"—innocently advanced but cynical in its after-effects upon culture—could be applied to all the parts of learning by educational theorists, by businessmen, by local politicians, by administrators, even by philosophers. Why study the classics, when, if you wanted to make reading attractive, current newspapers, magazines, and novels immediately reflected life? Why study geometry, when nobody ever really "used" it, and the adding machine was found in every office? Why study Greek or Latin, when nobody spoke or wrote or read either language in any American community? Why bother with ancient history, or with the history of Europe, when all the history that anybody needed was enough American history to insure patriotism in the young? Why, for that matter, bother even with American history, since all history has to do with the dead past, and courses in civics and social studies fit you immediately for "democracy"?

From the testimony of utility it seemed for a time that only science escaped. But the escape was more apparent than real. The vagaries of scientists were encouraged because, in the long run, they paid off; and the doctrine was seriously advanced by scientists and accepted by business that the justification for pure research, or the pursuit of

knowledge for its own sake in the laboratory, was that you could never anticipate what particular scientific discovery could be made into profitable invention. The patron saint of science in this dispensation was not Aristotle but Thomas A. Edison; and industry, supporting its laboratories, proudly boasted that it aided science because out of any hundred experiments it was probable that one at least would bring in profits amply to support both the other ninety-nine and the shareholders. It is said, as a consequence of the superior allure of this pattern of finance, that about 87 per cent of the current crop of Ph.D.'s in chemistry go into industrial work, leaving 13 per cent to support chemistry as pure science in the colleges. Can it be that this symbolic disproportion between the immense scientific zeal of the Americans and the poverty of American contributions to basic scientific philosophy is a function of the notion that knowledge is training, not education?

There is, of course, another side. My brief statement ignores the minority, even in business, that support scholarship and science for the love of learning. It ignores the solid truth that American know-how has brought immense benefits to Americans and to the world at large. The Americans, taken as a whole, are a comfortable and healthy people; they exhibit, even in the Age of Anxiety, a quality of cheerfulness quite as remarkable as that of which Howells ironically complained when he reproached his fellow novelists for assuming that the more smiling aspects of life were the more American. Their medical science is the wonder of the universe. Their dentistry surpasses that of all the rest of

mankind. They have more automobiles, telephones, typewriters, radios, television sets, launderettes, billboards, vending machines, and self-service stores than any other country. Mixed in with these, they also have an impressive record in the way of traffic fatalities, juvenile delinquency, crimes of violence, suicide, psychiatric cases, and divorce. Latterly, therefore, it is beginning to occur to at least a minority of Americans that utility is not enough, and that the uses of science require some greater philosophical direction than that offered by industry.

World War II has also had its profound effects upon knowledge. It has immensely widened the gap between the support given science and the support given anything else not immediately associated with national security; and it has restricted the free flow of philosophic ideas among scientists by a crazy-quilt pattern of controls by the police—that is, by information from faceless accusers accumulated in the national archives. In the *New York Times* of February 2, 1956, Dr. I. I. Rabi put the resulting paradox cogently when he said that “despite the rising realization of the importance of applied science to the national economy and to the national military posture,” American esteem for science and scientists—by which I understand him to mean the disinterested pursuit of truth—is “lower than it has ever been in this century.” Science and scientists, he averred,

are regarded as national assets to be increased and preserved for the value of increasing the military strength of the country, in multiplying its resources and the conveniences and amenities of life, and generally raising the standard of living.

No one quarrels with these worthy applications of knowledge [but] what disturbs and frightens the scientist is the increasing tendency to treat science and the scientist as a commodity with all the appropriate export and import regulations which relate to important strategic materials.

The aids to scientific education stem more from the fear that Russia will surpass us than from an interest in scientific knowledge and a concern for the general vigor and health of the scientific endeavor and the preservation of a strong scientific tradition. It certainly does not stem from a desire of the public to know more about science and the visible and invisible world.

In other words, science in America is no longer natural philosophy. Its philosophic controls have been lost to industrialists and the military.

2

I remarked in the preceding chapter that knowledge is either mensurative knowledge or knowledge of the past; and that, although it is impossible absolutely to distinguish between the two, this division seems more significant than the artificial tripartite splitting of knowledge into the humanities, science, and the social sciences. The difficulty inherent in the humanities-science-social-science pattern is not only that it encourages the practitioner of any one of the three disciplines to quarrel with the other two and, in quarreling, blame them for whatever is wrong in education, but also that it implies that each one of the three parts of knowledge is the happy possessor of some peculiar moral virtue not shared by the others—"value judgments" in the

humanities, self-effacement in science, concern for the betterment of man among the social scientists. The distinctions break down upon inspection. Science is dedicated to the greatest of all "value judgments"—the belief that truth, however disagreeable, is preferable to error, however pleasant. Concern for bettering mankind moves the humanist in the library and the scientist in the laboratory; and self-effacement is necessary even if you are going to inquire into the sexual habits of mankind. Dr. Rabi's anxiety about the low estate of science is not something to be viewed with vindictive joy by embattled humanists, for it is the honorable anxiety of a humane man. Contrariwise, the humanist who rejoices that business is at length coming around because businessmen desiderate better letter-writing displays as inhumane an attitude as does the businessman. The style is the man himself; and no amount of practice in composition courses will draw anything but a cheap style out of a cheap person. Personality may be influenced by education; but syntax, grammar, and spelling are in themselves no more humane than chess-playing or iceboating.

In short, we come back to confusion of vocabulary, and in drawing to a close this analysis, we might profitably return to our basic difficulty. Let us begin by distinguishing two meanings of the word "humane." A humane man may be a person marked by compassion, as in Burke's phrase about "great tenderness of heart and humanity of disposition," or in the modern title, "Humane Society," but it does not require humanistic scholarship to attain this admirable virtue, nor are those who excel in humanistic scholarship

ipso facto humane men and women. Elementary as this is, only the other day a great newspaper in the national capital referred to the American Council of Learned Societies as dedicated "to the pursuit of *humanitarian* studies"!

The second meaning of the word "humane" is tantamount to what the eighteenth century had in mind when it talked about "polite learning." The humane individual in this sense was one whose thinking, whose conduct, whose attitudes toward others were governed by "civility"—that is, by the assumption that in civil society any self-respecting person accepts a code of behavior that preserves his own dignity and respects the dignity of others. Courtesy and refinement were essential and so, for that matter, was kindness, though the kindness might be more formal than radical (as in the case of Chesterfield in fact and that of Major Pendennis in fiction). Learning was so far involved as a belief in polite letters assumed that politeness could be transferred from the study to the drawing room, and certainly what was soundest in the doctrine was the assumption that maturation through formal discipline is necessary to form a humane mind. But the humane man was not a humanistic specialist. The eighteenth century is filled with satire by humane writers against specialists in humanistic scholarship, a single example being Swift's attack in *Gulliver's Travels* upon the Academy of Laputa. Equally, the other, weaker side of this theory of the relation of study to conduct was the finishing school, where one learned nothing in particular, and did not learn even that very well.

Whether in the one sense or the other, a humane man

was not inevitably associated with humanism, still less with humanistic scholarship. He was expected to have acquired some acquaintance with those branches of learning (or a few of them) Americans today call "the humanities," but again, one must distinguish. Learning or literature connected with human culture—such is the common definition of the humanities, but this definition, as I have earlier indicated, does not really define. Science is also connected with human culture. Economics, social psychology, medicine, engineering, theology—these and a dozen other subjects are quite as closely connected with human culture as are literature, music, and philosophy. I shall come in a minute to what seems to me a better statement about the humanities; here let it suffice to point out that if, as is common in American education, by the "humanities" is meant literature, the languages, philosophy, the fine arts, and history, professional study by competent scholars of the humanities is not necessarily either humane or a contribution to humanism, though it may be a contribution to humanistic scholarship.

The undergraduate, introduced to the world of Plato, may safely conclude that the essence of philosophy is discourse of wisdom, and he will be in some sense right. If, in his enthusiasm, he elects a course in symbolic logic, he will soon wonder what has happened to wisdom. If, after reading Shakespeare, he infers that the principal aim of literary studies is to introduce him to a noble company of men and women in a noble world, he will be right; but if, carried away by interest, he tries to get to the bottom of that puz-

zling play *Measure for Measure*, he will be led on to the publications of the Modern Language Association of America, to *Studies in Philology*, to dissertations in German (if he can read that language), to monographs on Elizabethan psychology, to a vast library of learning or pedantry, call it what you will, which, if you are to believe educators, has nothing to do with education. The enrichment of style by contact with many languages is an admirable theoretical aim; linguistic studies are often as exacting as mathematics, and have in them about the same immediate human warmth. To "appreciate" Brahms is one thing; the study of musicology is something else. Persons who advocate the "humanities" because they are "broadening," when they confront the humanities in any advanced stage of action, as in the graduate school, specialized publications, or the shop talk of scholars, are commonly brought up short, and go off at a denunciatory tangent about pedantry, antiquarianism, ivory towers, and inhumane specialists. The humanities are most clearly thought of as parts of the American academic curriculum, paradoxically no more and no less "humane" than science or social science. The term is purely descriptive, not evaluative; so much so, that if the humanities were called something else—say, the curriculum in letters—educational discussion would be vastly clarified. The only "humane" aspect of the humanities is that they can be used for the purposes of humanism.

Humanistic scholarship is nothing more than the professional employment, for professional purposes in the humanities, of technical modes for the advancement of

knowledge. An archaeologist dusting off potsherds, a linguist restudying the forms of verbs in Old High Germanic for sleeping and dreaming, a student of Sartre trying to distinguish the effect on the For-itself and the In-itself of the principle of destruction, a bibliophile establishing priority between two variants of an old book, an art expert proving that a Rembrandt print is a forgery, a musicologist passing on the authenticity of a score supposedly by Orlando di Lasso—men such as these are adding to knowledge in their several fields and are therefore practicing humanistic scholarship. They are representatives of humanistic *expertise*. But the “humaneness” of their outlook will have precisely as much and precisely as little to do with their professional success as it has to do with the professional success of economists, chemists, newspaper editors, football coaches, or theologians. They will not be humane because they specialize in the humanities; they will be humane only in proportion as they interpret what they do philosophically.

We can acquire wisdom about the potentialities of an American century only when we will cease to talk about the humanities as if these parts of learning possess some mystical quality not found anywhere else; when we cease to infer that humanistic scholarship has a unique value not found in science or the social sciences; and when, however much we desire to increase the number of humane persons in the world, we stop assuming that their humanity will increase if they study music and literature, but shrink if they study science and engineering. Humanistic scholarship is a normal human activity, intended to increase our knowledge

of the humanities. The humanities may help us to educate persons who eventually turn out to be humane in either sense of the word. But the humanities *per se* are only areas of discourse, just as humanistic scholarship is only another name for *expertise* in given fields. Everything depends upon the interpretation of the one, and the uses of the other, and this in turn demands an understanding of *humanism*, something neither frightening nor formidable. It is only a particular theory of knowledge and of man.

3

The term itself came into being as a useful word to distinguish secular knowledge from theology, or knowledge of divine purposes. Doubtless everything is interwoven with everything else; doubtless the Renaissance was indebted to the Middle Ages and the Middle Ages to the classical world, and so on to the dark backward and abysm of time, but nonetheless the rise of humanism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was an attempt that, even if it admitted theology as the queen of the sciences, proposed that theology should be a constitutional monarch, if a monarch at all; and not a despot, even if an enlightened despot. The nature of man as man, not the nature of man as a soul weakly wandering between birth into sin and death as a gateway to hell; man as man, a being in his own right, whatever one's religious view of him might be—this was the original intent and meaning of humanism in the West. Therefore it was that the original humanists, with all their original vacillations and weaknesses on their heads, gladly wandered

back in time to the groves of Academe in order to comprehend mankind outside of Christianity and under some other dispensation than that of Augustinian theology.

This historical truth does not mean that humanism was opposed to religion, since there was also such a thing as Christian humanism. It means only that the humanists desired to comprehend the human race, not Christians only. If in the long run the acceptance of Christian salvation was necessary for the understanding of the human race, well and good. If in the long run the acceptance of variant doctrines of salvation—for example, Catholic and Protestant doctrines—assisted one to understand the human race, well and good also. If in the long run the human race also made sense before or outside of Christianity—for example, in the persons of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, or in the persons of cultured Saracens, or Hindus, or Chinese, in parts of the globe that had never known Christianity, this also was well and good. Possibly the Christian point of view was the best, even the only, way to understand mankind. Possibly also Christianity was but one of the interesting products of human history. In any event the humanist began with the human race, not with the church, and in making this shift altered the basis of human knowledge. Like all great shifts of emphasis in history, it is a shift simple in itself but difficult to comprehend, so difficult, indeed, that some excellent scholars have virtually refused to admit that it ever occurred. Nevertheless, this is the first essential element in humanism: that it is nontheological.

For reasons as often political and economic as they were

philosophical, Americans in the Age of the Enlightenment decided that they wanted a state separated from the church; and in this belief they have prospered for a hundred and eighty years. Their public school system is secular. Their state-supported universities are secular. Their public libraries are secular. So are most of their art museums and their other cultural institutions. If a religious body desires to establish schools and colleges, libraries and museums under its private control, this is entirely possible in America; all that the Americans ask is that no particular religious body shall control either education or America. From time to time religious bodies impinge upon secular culture in the United States, and from time to time secularism checks this or that religious development, but in the course of two centuries the Americans have managed to make the secular state and their religious organizations live in harmony. In America religious institutions may, if they wish, employ all the resources of secular humanism, and secular education may study religion (or religions), but secular learning does not culminate in theology, and theology does not devote public learning to evangelical ends. To Americans this is commonplace; what they do not always realize is that it is one of the most brilliant commonplaces of modern times. What they also do not always realize is that, in thus differentiating the role of the state and the role of the church and differentiating also the way and purpose of pursuing knowledge for secular ends and for sacred ends, they are emphasizing one of the central ideas of Western humanism.

In the pages of the *Census of Religious Bodies in the*

United States the fascinated reader will discover a small denomination with the title, *The One True Holy Apostolic Overcoming Church of God*. The Americans do not deny the possibility that there may be a one true holy apostolic overcoming church of God, but even if there were one such universally accepted by all mankind, they would still believe, if their constitutional precept is any indication, that mankind has got further by pursuing knowledge for its own sake than by pursuing it as a means to salvation. They do not deny that salvation may help knowledge, and they do not deny that knowledge may be useful for salvation. All they insist upon is that these two realms of discourse shall be kept separate. Their aim, whether they know it or not, is not scholasticism but humanism.

In the United Nations building there is a room set aside for meditation and prayer. Various well-meaning persons have wanted to make this room into a chapel; and, confronted with the question whether a Swedish Lutheran, a French Catholic, a Greek Orthodox, and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints from Utah would all be comfortable in a room designed in the tradition of some one of these faiths, they have fallen back on a doctrine of blur: let the room be religious but not denominational. But "denominational" is a word from Western Christendom. The Muslim, the Parsee, the Taoist, the Confucian, the Marxist materialist, and, for aught I know, an idolater delegate from the Pacific will not understand "denominational" in this sense; and the United Nations organization has wisely refused to give the chamber in ques-

tion any other attributes than that of quietness and peace. The wish is not to add to political rivalry, religious bitterness. In some sense this situation is virtually symbolical.

It should be said therefore that if there were an American cultural hegemony in the world, or only in a part of the world, it is unlikely to produce religious bitterness. The Americans read with bewilderment the difficulties that Protestantism seems presently to be experiencing in certain overzealous Catholic countries, and they read with indignation the difficulties that religion seems to be experiencing in certain overzealous Communist countries. They had thought mankind had got beyond this sort of thing. In this respect they are better exponents of humanism than certain nations nearer the historical source of humanistic theory. If the "divorce" between belief and knowledge leads mankind into difficulties (and it sometimes does), the marriage of belief and knowledge seems to Americans to lead mankind into greater difficulties, and they prefer to cling to the tenets of the Enlightenment and of Western humanism in this important regard.

But the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake is a meaningless phrase. He who solves a crossword puzzle, he who accumulates all the varieties of pants buttons there have ever been, or he who boasts that he can recite the Bible from memory in one sense pursues knowledge for its own sake, perhaps more purely than does the humanist. Knowledge for its own sake was pursued when in Nazi Germany warped medical research tortured living human beings for alleged scientific purposes. Indeed, from Mrs. Shelley's

Frankenstein creating a monster, to H. G. Wells' Dr. Moreau trying to guide and short-cut evolution by vivisection and surgery, the imagination of mankind has delighted to shudder before the concept of a specialist so ideally evil, his search for knowledge has connoted absolute destruction. The virtuoso has pursued knowledge for an idle end, the pedant has pursued knowledge for a vapid end, and the Dr. Jekylls of fact and fancy have pursued knowledge for so evil an end it has turned them into Mr. Hydes. Clearly then, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake is not humanism until and unless the context of that pursuit itself is noble. And it is precisely here that the American way of life, excellent in its refusal to sacrifice knowledge to theology, is by no means as clear in its intent as well-wishers might desire.

Just as humanism, in severing itself from theology, did not therefore rush upon atheism and embrace it as a bride, so humanism, in its quiet attempt to find universals rather than a particular belief, did not rush upon materialism, and should not have uncritically accepted the utilitarian definition of learning it acquired in the nineteenth century and retains in the United States today.

Humanism implies an assumption about man. It implies that every human being by the mere fact of his existence has dignity, that this dignity begins at birth, that the possession of this dignity, even if dimly realized by the possessor, is, or ought to be, the continuum of his life, and that to strip him of this dignity is to degrade him in so outrageous a way that we call the degradation inhumane.

That animals also from time to time exhibit dignity is indisputable. That man is, among other things, an animal seems scientifically plain. But the dignity of an animal is something other than the dignity of man, worthy in its kind but of a different order of value. The animal aspect of man is but part of his value, whereas the animal aspect of an animal is all of its value. The difference in value may be briefly stated when we say that in the Western world civilized man protests against the inhumane treatment of animals, but does not protest against their slaughter for food.

The dignity of man, like free will, cannot be satisfactorily defined. Nevertheless, it is, or seems to be, a universal experience. It consists, apparently, in an inner consciousness of individuation. I am I, and nothing can shake me in this deep conviction of myself; or if, as in drugs or disease, this conviction is shaken, the ensuing horror is so great as silently to testify to the quintessential meaning of individuation, when its loss is realized.

History seems to demonstrate that the attribution of dignity to other human beings is justified by events. In abnormal cases, as in the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany, revulsion from this form of obscenity, once the facts are known, seems also to testify to the rightness of our assumption about human dignity. Moreover, anthropologists believe that no society ever exalted cruelty into a virtue *per se*; i.e., cruelty may have been justified in this or that society as a means to a desirable end, but never as a desirable end *per se*. The inference again seems to be that

an offense against the inner sense of dignity is the unpardonable sin.

Modes of expressing the dignity of man constitute the substance of humanism. The pursuit of knowledge as an end in itself takes on dignity in proportion as its aim, avowed or implicit, is the dignity of man, and it ceases to be humanistic in proportion as its aim falls below the assumption that the dignity of man is the proper spur and aim of knowledge. Thus, all knowledge that reduces man to either the status of a machine or the status of an animal is non-humanistic, as in the instance of any form of behavioral psychology which denies that the feeling of free will is an essential datum of consciousness. Nevertheless, knowledge which at first sight seems to have nothing to do with man and may, indeed, seem to reduce him to littleness and obscurity in a ghastly universe, as in the case of astronomy, may yet testify to his dignity because it testifies to his intellectual honesty.

The opening of the American Declaration of Independence, passages in the letters of Thomas Jefferson, the pronouncements of Benjamin Franklin, the statements of John Adams—it is in documents like these at the end of the eighteenth century amid the full daylight of the Enlightenment that the American version of Western humanism is to be found. It is not uniquely American. It is compounded of many simples, and moreover one hopes that its enduring worth as an American philosophy is not that it is American but that it is philosophic. When a distinguished American President referred to this country as the last, best hope of

man, he did so, not because its Americanism made for righteousness and truth, but because righteousness and truth made it American.

In the famous state paper that created the United States a set of propositions was laid down, each of which has been attacked but all of which, taken together, seem to give us the philosophical context in which humanism has its meaning. It is there made a self-evident truth that human beings have dignity; that is, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, and that among these rights are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. None of these terms can be so clearly defined that no exception can be taken to their definition, but the totality of this vision is a totality of nobility, the assumptions of this paragraph are assumptions springing from a feeling for the dignity of man.

For the eighteenth century the chief argument for the dignity of man was his capacity for reason. The most striking fact in world history during the twentieth century has been a decreasing faith in man, particularly in his general intelligence. By general intelligence I mean the undifferentiated intelligence of men, their capacity to bring forth and recognize the worth of ideas other than those specific to technology and science. The movement of culture from Goethe to Hitler, from Mazzini to Mussolini, from Turgenev to Stalin is an illustration of this tendency. The century of Voltaire yielded to the century of Sartre, and in the same arc of time the heroic man of Scott, of Beethoven,

and of Delacroix dwindled into the pitiful man of a novelist like Faulkner and the frightened man of a poet like Eliot.

In the United States we have been swept off our feet by a theory of human nature which has substituted personality for character. Names in the news, it is commonplace, have more value than principle or policy, for these are intellectual concepts, whereas names evoke emotion. We have shifted, or seem to have shifted, from the assumption that man is an entity sufficiently capable of reason to be, though in limited degree, the master of his fate, to the assumption that interested motive and irrational compulsion *are* his fate; and yet, along with this, in the fields of invention and technology we exactly reverse the emphasis and proclaim that the application of rational methods to comfort and security is the highest achievement of civilization. There is much to be said for comfort and security, provided you first make sure what sort of person is to be made comfortable and secure. But it was not the original intent of the United States to plump for comfort. The original intent was to make this new republic "the best single gateway . . . to the manifold hopes then stirring the minds of men that reason and justice could be substituted for authority and superstition in guiding human affairs." There seems to be no sound reason for confining this notion to the eighteenth century.

The Jeffersonian concept of the pursuit of knowledge rests upon a philosophy that denies mechanical man. By mechanical man one may mean man physically or psychologically determined by heredity and environment—an interpretation to which Western thought ever and again returns

only to be repelled by its naïveté. Or by mechanical man one may mean man economically determined, whether the form of reasoning take shape as the economic man of classical political economy or his modification as Marxist man forever being molded by Hegelian devolution that never quite devolves. By mechanical man one may also mean religious man—that is, man so pessimistically interpreted by neo-Calvinist theologians, not to speak of theological physicists, that all he can look forward to is destruction. The American version of Western humanism will not accept any of these versions of man.

The horror of the hydrogen bomb (and its successors, if there are any) is a very great horror, indeed, the more so because it is a man-made horror and may therefore be equated with the work of the evil scientist I spoke of earlier. The evil, however, does not lie in the madness of scientists but in the potential madness of statesmen, so that we can come back, as we must always come back, to civil man—that is, to the question of human dignity and the purposes of the state. What looks like mere American cheerfulness has at this point something more than cheerfulness to offer. It has hope.

Our fears of atomic destruction are such lively fears it is hard for us to realize that the fears of the past were lively also. Consider, however, that at almost any period between the end of the third century and the end of the thirteenth Western man lived under the constant threat of extinction. Portents and prodigies surprised and terrified him; darkness and mystery surrounded him. The precarious existence

of his culture was threatened by unpredictable aliens—Germans, Slavs, Norsemen, Huns. In one era the Persians, in another the Saracens were dreadful enemies; and the Saracens had the advantage of a superior culture. Comets, earthquakes, tornadoes, pestilence, droughts, cloudbursts, famine, eclipses were frightening evidences of the wild, destructive energy of the universe. From the authority and superstition that supported this interpretation of life Western humanism intended to relieve mankind. On the whole it has succeeded until recently in doing so.

Clearly, if Western man wastes his energies brooding over destruction, destruction may now become real. But the American version of humanism, despite American success with the hydrogen bomb, is still designed to control destruction and to interpret the universe in other terms than those of Byron and the Marquis de Sade. Literary men of course revel in the allurements of a *Menschen-dämmerung*, but the Americans have seldom been misled by literature. One does not notice among biologists, garage mechanics, and members of the medical profession the same obsession with either destruction or mechanical man. The sun shines, the birds sing, and the Boy Scouts go out on their routine hikes—I but paraphrase Emerson, a representative American, in modern terms. American humanism insists that rational control is as real as despair, cheerfulness and fortitude as essential as destruction. Judgment and balance are against a premature suicide, or can be made so if we educate philosophically.

In sum, the tradition of Western humanism will be safe,

even in an American century, provided the Americans retain their faith in the philosophical assumptions of a democratic republic, not mistaking patriotism for insight. Mankind, whether in the United States or elsewhere, must either halt its flight from reason or be content with authoritarian rule. If scholars and scientists cannot be let alone to pursue knowledge within the gracious framework of belief in the dignity of man, we shall have not scientists but cynics, not scholars but devotees of Big Brother in 1984. If our artists cannot believe in the general intelligence of mankind today, we shall not come to that belief tomorrow unless we return to the tenets of humanism. If we cannot respect the individual as Jefferson respected him, we shall have to suffer the tyranny of the mass.

In their better moments most persons are rather decent, reasonable human beings; it is to strengthen their decency and their reason that American humanism must devote itself. In the simple but magnificent faith that individuals have dignity this humanism takes its stand, and in so proclaiming believes that it can in the long run help to make reason and the will of God prevail. If this be mysticism, so likewise denial and negation are mysticism—mysticism emotional and opaque. American humanism is neither emotional nor opaque. Belief for belief, the American version of Western humanism has better survival value than systems giving up belief in rationality because it is secular, and celebrating impotence because their adherents are afraid.

(Continued from front flap)

conceal cowardice under a cloak of inertia.

This caustic and witty volume will certainly antagonize anyone satisfied with the state of American humanities, and will delight and amaze others. No pessimist, Dr. Jones asserts that "belief for belief" of all versions of Western humanism the American has the best chance for survival.

Howard Mumford Jones was born in Saginaw, Michigan. After college in Wisconsin, he received his M.A. from the University of Chicago, his Doctor of Literature from Harvard, and his Doctor of Humanities from Tulane. He has had a long and distinguished teaching career, including the post of Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. A former Chairman of the American Council of Learned Societies, Dr. Jones's books include *Education and World Tragedy*, *The Primer of Intellectual Liberty*, and *The Pursuit of Happiness*.

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